



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

BUSINESS MEETING OPEN SESSION MINUTES

June 3, 2025

Meeting:	School Committee
Date:	June 3, 2025
Location:	MERMHS Learning Commons
Attendees:	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent Chris Reed, Chairperson Lindsay Banks John Binieris Jake Foster Kate Koch-Sundquist, Vice-Chair Nadia Wetzler Theresa Whitman
Absent:	Michelle Cresta, Director of Finance & Operations
Guests:	Heather Leonard, Director Curriculum & Technology
Recorded by:	Maria Schmidt
Link to Reports and Presentations	https://www.mersd.org/domain/785

A. Call to Order of – Mr. Reed called the School Committee Business meeting to order at 6:12 p.m. following conclusion of the district retiree reception.

B. Business Meeting Open Session

1) Public Comment (Guidelines for public comment can be found in sections BEDH and BEDH-E of the School Committee policy manual) – none

2) Consent Agenda –

- Acceptance of Warrants: AP Vouchers 1076 and payroll warrant for May 22, 2025

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Mr. Reed moved to approve Accounts Payable Voucher 1076 and the payroll warrant for May 22, 2025. Mr. Foster seconded the motion.

Questions: Mr. Foster noted a large expenditure for football helmet testing and asked how often this is done. Superintendent Beaudoin said that she presumes it is an annual occurrence for safety. The superintendent noted that Ms. Cresta is presenting expenditures in a slightly different way than the previous business manager. It is likely that these costs were included differently in previous years.

The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Binieris voted remotely.

- 3) **Chairperson's Report** – Mr. Reed surrendered the gavel to Superintendent Beaudoin in preparation for School Committee Reorganization
- 4) **School Committee Reorganization – The policy guide for reorganization and subcommittee can be found in section BDA of the School Committee policy manual** - Superintendent Beaudoin called for nominations for the position of School Committee Chairperson.

Nominations: Ms. Whitman nominated Mr. Reed for the position of School Committee Chairperson. Ms. Koch-Sundquist seconded the nomination.

Deliberation: Ms. Whitman stated that Mr. Reed and Ms. Koch-Sundquist are a great team, and Mr. Reed has served well in the position. Ms. Whitman is in favor of two-year terms for the positions of chair and vicechair. Ms. Wetzler agreed that a multi-year appointment allows the chair and vicechair to benefit from experience in the positions. Ms. Wetzler said that significant challenges in the coming year will benefit from Mr. Reed's experience.

Point of Clarification: Mr. Foster sought clarification regarding remote voting. The School Committee concluded that they had previously discussed the topic but did not take a binding vote on the issue. Consequently, there is nothing to prohibit remote voting.

Roll Call Vote:

Chris Reed - Yes

Lindsay Banks - Yes

John Binieris – Yes, vote cast remotely

Jake Foster - Yes

Kate Koch-Sundquist - Yes

Nadia Wetzler - Yes

Theresa Whitman - Yes

Mr. Reed was unanimously appointed to the position of School Committee Chairperson.

Mr. Reed moved for nominations for School Committee Vice Chairperson

Nominations: Mr. Foster nominated Ms. Koch-Sundquist for the position of School Committee Vice-Chairperson. Ms. Whitman seconded the nomination.

Deliberation: Mr. Foster described Ms. Koch-Sundquist as a great listener. Ms. Banks underlined the importance of having both Manchester and Essex represented in the two positions. Mr. Reed commented that he and Ms. Koch-Sundquist were elected to the School Committee at the same time and have worked closely together since in their roles on the negotiations subcommittee. He appreciates her perspective and has looked to her guidance when striving to consider the perspectives of all stakeholders.

Roll Call Vote:

Chris Reed - Yes

Lindsay Banks - Yes

John Binieris – Yes, vote cast remotely

Jake Foster - Yes

Kate Koch-Sundquist - Yes

Nadia Wetzler - Yes

Theresa Whitman - Yes

Ms. Koch-Sundquist was unanimously appointed to the position of School Committee Co-chairperson.

School Committee Subcommittee Structure for FY25-26 – The School Committee chose to postpone subcommittee restructuring until the summer workshop, the date of which is to be determined.

- 5) **Student Report** – Maggie Whitman. Ms. Whitman reported that the high school seniors are celebrating Senior Week and are in Maine for a whitewater rafting trip. Ms. Whitman said that students are wondering about the roll out of the new schedule, following the recent schedule realignment, and when high school schedules will be released for the coming school year. Ms. Whitman said that there is a lot of relief among students following passage of the budget. Ms. Whitman asked for SC input on what they would like to hear in her reports to the School Committee.

6) **Consent Agenda** –

- Minutes for approval: May 20, 2025

Mr. Foster moved to approve the minutes from May 20, 2025; Ms. Koch-Sundquist seconded the motion.

The motion passed 3-0. Mr. Reed and Ms. Whitman were not present for the May 20 SC meeting and abstained from the vote. Ms. Banks and Ms. Wetzler abstained from the vote as new members of the School Committee.

7) Sub-Committee Reports

- **Elementary Facilities/MSBC Sub-Committee** (John Binieris/Theresa Whitman) – Superintendent Beaudoin shared an overview of the building project process and updated the SC on where the building committee currently stands.

The Eligibility Phase is the first module and was completed in the fall.

Draft: Essex Elementary – Projected Timeline For Planning Purposes			
MSBA Module/Actions	Length	Potential Timeline	
Module 1 - Eligibility	270	March 4, 2024	11/29/24
<i>BOD Authorization invite to eligibility</i>	0 days		
<i>Initial Compliance Certification</i>	30 days	3/4/2024	4/4/2024
<i>SBC</i>	60 days	3/4/2024	5/3/2024
<i>*Educational Profile Questionnaire</i>	90 days		6/3/2024
<i>Enrollment Projections</i>	90 days		6/3/2024
<i>Maintenance & Capital Planning Information</i>	130 days		8/30/2024
<i>Enrollment Meeting</i>	180 days		8/30/2024
<i>Local authorization of funding</i>	270 days		11/29/2024
<i>BOD Authorization invite to F&S</i>	270 days		11/29/2024

Currently, the Essex Building Committee is in the process of forming the project team. The Owner’s Project Manager (OPM) was selected over the winter. The building committee is now learning the process for procuring a designer (architect) and has released the Designer Request for Proposal. The building committee will review submitted applications and provide the MSBA with a request for the designer they prefer. However, the MSBA has the final decision on the appointment. One item considered by the MSBA is the workload of potential designers. The School Building will have two meetings over the summer, on the fourth Tuesday of each month. These meetings are public. It is expected that Module 2 will be concluded on August 12, 2025.

FEASIBILITY FUNDING	Module 2 – Forming the Project Team	185 days	Wed 11/29/24	Tue 8/12/25
	<i>Key Activities</i> Hire Owners Project Manager (OPM) Hire Designer (Architect) MSBA Approvals			
	Module 3 – Feasibility Study	202 days	Wed 8/13/25	Thu 5/21/26
	<i>Key Activities</i> PDP (Preliminary Design Program) PSD (Preferred Schematic Design) MSBA Approval			
	Existing Conditions /Site Development /Educational program /Develop Prelim Alternatives /Final Evaluation of Alternatives			
	Module 4 – Schematic Design	151 days	Fri 5/22/26	Fri 12/18/26
	<i>Key Activities</i> Schematic Design MSBA Approval			
	Module 5 - Local Actions/approvals	70 days	Mon 10/26/26	Fri 1/29/27

Module 3 is the Feasibility Study. At this point, the work will turn to answering questions about location and design for the project from the checklist. This exploration will include a cost-benefit analysis of each option for a building site and student configuration. The goal is to determine the most cost-effective solution that supports the district’s desired educational program. Superintendent Beaudoin confirmed that enrollment projections are included in these considerations, although the report does not capture real estate transactions and movement in the community.

Ms. Banks asked how feasibility is impacted by the regional agreement, given that a change to the agreement would be necessary if the building committee chose to combine elementary students from both communities in a single location. The superintendent replied that a preliminary step will include determining if the Memorial building has the capacity to house students from Essex or if it would need to be modified. A cost analysis will be provided for each scenario. The MSBA offers potential reimbursement for specific aspects of the final build. The architect will designate where this is the case for each option considered.

Mr. Foster clarified that the question is about the point at which the final building choice will need to align with policy contained in the regional agreement. Superintendent Beaudoin said that the district would have to amend the regional agreement, giving the district the authority to make the proposal, before the MSBA would consider a consolidated design with students from both communities in a single location.

Mr. Reed said that, although there are strong feelings about what the communities want to see in the final design, the district is committed to examining all options. The superintendent stated that the building committee can only explore the options already

designated in the feasibility scope document. Some of the options may be crossed off quickly.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated that there is protocol and structure at each level of the process that must be followed in order for the district to remain eligible for grant reimbursement from the MSBA. Ms. Whitman and Mr. Foster noted that ESBC meetings are public and the building website is up and public.

Ms. Wetzler asked to what extent budget considerations for the building project are dependent on the operating budget and staffing considerations. Ms. Whitman commented that budget concerns led to consideration of some of the building options on the list. Mr. Reed clarified that approval of the operating budget is voted upon separately from the building vote, but they both impact taxes.

Ms. Wetzler asked about roll off from the high school building project debt. It will be paid off in 2034. Ms. Whitman noted that the district had hoped to delay taking on a new construction project until then, but expenses from upkeep of the deteriorating Essex building made that untenable. Superintendent Beaudoin underlined that 2034 is also the half-life point of the middle/high school building and the district may need to address upgrade needs at that point.

- **Finance Committee** (Jake Foster) – No Report
- **Negotiation Team Sub-Committee** (Kate Koch-Sundquist/Chris Reed) – No Report
- **Policy/Communication Sub-Committee** (Kate Koch-Sundquist /Theresa Whitman) – No Report

8) Superintendent’s Report – Pam Beaudoin.

a. General Update

- i. Number-Crunching Meeting: The superintendent was successful in contacting Anne Harrison and Alva Ingaharro, chairs of the Manchester and Essex select boards. Both are open to meeting as the number-crunching team in June. Superintendent Beaudoin said that the SC needs to choose its representation for these meetings and propose meeting dates.
- ii. Recent Events: District-wide Grade 5 Essex Shipbuilding Museum “Land and Sea” program; Elementary chorus and band showcase; Governor Healey visit; Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce student recognitions; MERHS Junior/Senior Prom.
- iii. Upcoming Events
 1. Continued post-season play for athletic teams
 2. Parent Orientation for Rising Grade Six Students
 3. End of Year Elementary Advancement Ceremonies

- 4. HS Baccalaureate – Thursday, June 5, 6:00 pm
- 5. HS Graduation - Friday, June 6, 4:00 pm
- iv. Scheduling – The high school had a late start on schedule completion due to work on alignment with the middle school, but it is expected that high school students will receive schedules next week. The middle school will also be sending out a communication to its families regarding any changes resulting from the alignment. The superintendent said that the biggest change will be to the group lunch.
- v. Hiring FY26
 - 1. Fourteen positions are open, as of May 20, but this number may change. Teacher Assistant needs are usually posted by the second week of June.
 - 2. Interim Middle School Principal Search – The search is ongoing, and the goal is to hire by July. The superintendent said that they are striving for someone who is a middle school expert to preserve the vision. Currently, this experience has not been found, but the superintendent was confident that the district will be able to successfully manage the situation. The superintendent said that even an earlier start to the search would have encountered a shallow pool of interest for this position. Applicant numbers are down. Ms. Wetzler asked if any of the previous applicants for Dean remain available. The superintendent has not seen repeat applicants.
- vi. North Shore Education Consortium Regional Transportation Agreement Formalized – Each participating district contributed \$5K for a study exploring possible savings from route consolidation as a regional body. Participation in the consortium is expected to save the district approximately 10% from last year’s transportation costs, approximately \$90K.

Comments: Ms. Banks expressed gratitude to the many community organizations that supported the grade five Land and Sea program, including the Friends of Essex Elementary, the Spaulding Education Fund, The Manchester Essex Rotary, Cell Signaling, New England Bio Labs, and the Cape Ann Community Foundation. Their partnership enabled this program to bring students together from both communities in a local, real-world experience. Ms. Banks also thanked the administration for pursuing the regional transportation agreement and continuing efforts to bring down costs.

- b. End-of-Year Goal Update –Superintendent Beaudoin said that School Committee members will receive a more detailed analysis in a packet. The superintendent said that the intent of the goals is to set a course.

Goal 1: Sustain Progress through leadership transition and budget constraints - Current goals were set during budget struggles during the last few years. Consequently, the goals include the effort to continue moving forward with budget efficiencies and providing direction through leadership changes. Further efficiencies were pursued via middle and high school schedule alignment. Although the first iteration of schedule alignment from FY24 was not implemented, it highlighted key ideas and challenges that informed the revised version for FY25. The new schedule has since been ratified through a new MOA with META. The agreement outlines a one-year pilot for FY26 which will allow the return of the grade six language program as a prelude to bringing back the elementary world language program in the future. The aligned schedule is expected to improve resource use, streamline faculty scheduling across buildings, and expand student opportunities over time.

Ms. Wetzler asked what the middle school has lost due to schedule alignment. The superintendent said that the middle school will no longer have a ME block. However, the middle school principal was open to this cut because the ME block has not lived up to expectations. There is the potential to redesign the ME block program in the future. All courses and instructional time are preserved at the middle school level, including the middle school academy.

Progress:

FY24 – 77% of deliverables met.

FY25 – 82% of three-year objectives met

The next three-year DIP will be released in fall 2025.

Goal 3 – Move Strategic Priorities from Professional Development to Classroom Practice. This goal focuses on teaching and learning. In FY24, 50% of administrative council time focused on teaching and learning through team walkthroughs, debriefs, and a book study (*Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*). In FY25, the administrative council dedicated 65% of its time to teaching and learning, including seven full day workshops on observing and analyzing instruction. The team:

- Trained in the Research for Better Teaching, Observing, and Analyzing teaching model and began working with the new DESE evaluation rubric
- Developed cultural competency look-fors to guide classroom observation and reflection
- Reviewed evaluation tools and protocols for consistency between schools and to align with instructional goals
- Drafted recommendations to revise evaluation documents, including integration of the look-fors and updates to the unannounced observation feedback tool

Next Steps: Over the summer, recommendations will be finalized for presentation to META. In the fall, the updated DESE classroom teacher rubric will be implemented. This update is already part of the teacher agreement and can be immediately rolled out. Also in the fall, the district will establish a joint labor management team to review and revise evaluation tools.

Superintendent Beaudoin clarified that the administrative council is comprised of K-12 principals, deans, and directors.

Goal 2 – Develop a K-12 Library Program Aligned with Strategic Priorities. Initial steps were taken in FY24 to improve services, including hiring of two full-time library TAs. In FY25, the MERSD Library Task Force was formed, comprised of teachers, administrators, and community members, to guide improvement efforts. The group researched best practices and program models; surveyed the community on library use and needs; and identified top priorities. Priorities include hiring a certified school librarian, expanding middle school access and study spaces, and building partnerships with the Manchester and Essex public libraries.

Next Steps: Final recommendations will be shared in Fall 2025. A full-time librarian at the middle/high school will be included in the FY27 budget, with funding coming from reallocation of the TA positions and \$50K in additional resources. The task force will continue its work in FY26.

Superintendent Beaudoin said that the requirements of the librarian position have grown to include media literacy, AI, and ethical considerations. Community surveys revealed that middle school students want more access to the library, and independent drop-in is not the best model for this age group. Middle school students are also looking for more defined spaces. The task force will explore how to meet the needs of both middle and high school students.

Discussion: Mr. Foster thanked the superintendent for her insights, especially into the “aha” moments and the process behind decisions.

9) Continued Business –

- a. **District Improvement Plan End-of-Year Update** – Superintendent Beaudoin and Heather Leonard. Superintendent Beaudoin introduced the District Improvement Plan (DIP) update, providing an overview of the cycles that live within the DIP. The district plan includes a ten-year strategic plan. Within this live the DIP, which has three three-year-increments toward the ten-year goals and multiple two-year school improvement plans which in turn inform educator plans.

District Plan

- Mission, Vision, and Strategic Plan provide the structure
- Establishes district road map
- Informs development of school and educator plans
- Living document



Superintendent Beaudoin described the District Improvement Plan (DIP) as being informed by three information sets: Federal and State mandates direct the district, for instance with attendance guidelines and new educational rubrics or guidelines. The district's Strategic Plan determines how mandates are met, guided by the district's core values. Finally, student data and local needs assessments mold how the district meets student needs. These include third party assessments, like MCAS or iReady, and special education reviews. The pending DESE review (expected in July) will contribute to two areas of information. The superintendent described these information sources as data-driven rather than interest-based.

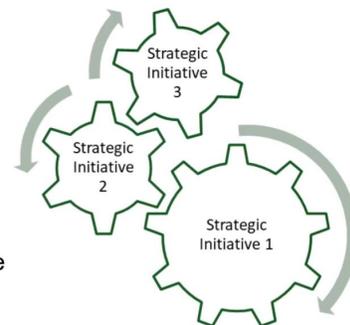
MERSD is three years into its ten-year Strategic Plan. Superintendent Beaudoin said that everything ties to the Vision.

Superintendent Beaudoin characterized the strategic initiatives as interconnected and working to support each other by creating the conditions under which students can learn and be successful.

2022-25 District Improvement Plan Strategic Initiatives

Curriculum & Instruction Focused Strategic Initiatives

- Establish and foster an authentic Pre-K-12 learning environment.
- Integrate social emotional learning into all aspects of the school day.
- Celebrate and nurture an inclusive and diverse school culture that recognizes the contributions and uniqueness of all individuals.



Included in School Committee meeting materials is a detailed document with the three-year district improvement plan and all deliverables. Ms. Leonard said that some of the objectives have been met, others have changed district practice or program, creating a new starting place, and other objectives have been adjusted or reconsidered based on changing needs, inputs, and approaches.

Superintendent Beaudoin defined the Strategic Initiative as a ten year, big-picture objective, and there are four of them. The “objectives” are the three-year goals in the DIP. The superintendent defined “deliverables” as commitments by the district to meet its three-year objectives. Tonight’s report applies to progress toward meeting the district’s three-year objectives. Ms. Leonard said there is a yearly end-of-year report, but in the third year of the DIP administration provides a DIP update in full. In the fall, the superintendent said there will be a presentation of the new DIP.

Strategic Initiative 1: Authentic Learning. Establish and foster an authentic Pre-K – 12 learning environment.

3 Year District Objectives
1. Conduct external elementary school level assessments of current practice inclusive of authentic learning self study. <i>[Student Centered, Student Achievement]</i>
2. Define “student centered authentic learning” and develop internal needs assessments for secondary level schools. <i>[Student Centered, Student Achievement]</i>
3. Map and deliver a developmentally differentiated professional development plan informed by the outcomes of school-based assessments.
4. Strengthen traditional academic program practices to ensure horizontal and vertical articulation. <i>[Student Centered, Student Achievement]</i>
5. Develop community partners to provide opportunities for students to connect learning to real-life application. <i>[Family and Community Partnership]</i>
6. Prioritize and support programming to promote creativity, innovation, and the arts. <i>[Student Centered, Family Community Partnership]</i>

Ms. Leonard said that Strategic Initiative 1 has had solid progress but has the most continued opportunities to grow and work to be done. However, the groundwork conditions have been laid to begin. The detailed report card will list quantitative measures of the given objectives. To best communicate the narrative of what these objectives look and feel like in real life, Ms. Leonard shared the experience for staff and students as a result of meeting objectives. This includes a common definition of “Authentic Learning” that supports K-12 learning. Students are engaging in applied learning experiences, like the STEAM Showcase and interdisciplinary coursework that mirrors real-life. As a result of work toward authentic learning, the district is experiencing increased collaboration with community partners. Pursuit of community ties will continue, for instance the recent grade five experience with the shipbuilding museum and a proposed project with the senior center. Twenty-two community partners were included in the district-wide professional

development day to explore expanding these partnerships. Ms. Leonard noted that the DIP for this cycle included mention of an arts director. The district has since shifted to utilize an opportunity to partner with DESE, forming an arts council to review the district's arts programming, outline next steps, and lay the foundation for implementation. Superintendent Beaudoin emphasized the work completed by the principals and district-wide administrators to facilitate relationships, share the vision, and prepare staff to move forward and meet objectives – “to get there, live in it, learn in it, and thrive in it.” This is what makes these pursuits multi-year.

Carry Forward Objectives: Objectives 3, 4, and 5. Ms. Leonard said that these objectives will carry forward in some capacity to the next DIP to make sure that it is met or to lean into the reiteration of the objective. Superintendent Beaudoin said that the carry forward objectives will inform the iteration of the next DIP.

Strategic Initiative 2: Social Emotional Learning. Integrate social emotional learning into all aspects of the school day.

3 Year District Objectives
1. Create a K-12 SEL Leadership model charged with training staff on ways to integrate a variety of strategies to help increase student availability for learning. <i>[Student Achievement, Student Centered, Equity]</i>
2. Create a Vertical SEL Team to support the implementation of SEL informed instruction. <i>[Student Achievement, Student Centered]</i>
3. Design an integration plan and rubric to use to measure effectiveness of SEL integration at the individual student and classroom level. <i>[Student Achievement, Student Centered, Equity]</i>
4. Involve families and the community in the SEL work that our staff and students are engaged in. <i>[Family and Community Partnerships]</i>

Superintendent Beaudoin stated that SEL and cultural competency work was the foundation so that the district can now focus on objective 4. Going forward, everything from investment in coaches to administrator observation training will build on the foundation of that earlier work to create an environment that is safe for student learning. The focus can now move to how teaching and learning is being approached. This work may be authentic-learning design or more traditional approaches to remediation and growth. Ms. Leonard stressed that there are many opportunities to take external components and incorporate them into the DIP, for example the work by DESE to establish an educational vision for the state of Massachusetts that has “deeper learning” as a cornerstone. Ms. Leonard shared that a lot of foundational work went into preparing staff to incorporate SEL into all aspects of the learning day. Superintendent Beaudoin stated that the district has SEL work to do in the high school to pull through the tools. The superintendent complimented the middle school’s success in using SEL to drive the middle school model concept, including the unique mindset and

needs of middle school students. Teachers were successful in developing beyond content delivery to treat the whole child. Work will continue, built upon this foundation.

Ms. Leonard reviewed the data sources that inform the district’s progress through its objectives and characterized the emphasis going forward as implementation, consistency, and coherence. Ms. Leonard said that work in the area will include expanding the SEL leadership team model up to the high school level. Ms. Leonard commented that parent education work has been occurring for several years, focusing this year on digital wellness. The superintendent said that offered parent education has been excellent, but a challenge has been parent/guardian attendance. The district continues to look for ways to reach more parents.

Carry Forward Objectives: Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4. Ms. Leonard characterized the carry forward objectives as designed to ensure that the initiative is clearly articulated from PK-12. The objectives also reflect monitoring practices.

Ms. Wetzler inquired about how students are prepared to enter the college environment, including self-advocacy

Strategic Initiative 3: Cultural Competency. Celebrate and nurture an inclusive and diverse school culture that recognizes the contributions and uniqueness of all individuals.

3 Year District Objectives
1. Identify and hire a consultant/coach to support the district in achieving cultural proficiency in the area of diversity, equity and inclusion. <i>[Student Centered, Student Achievement, Equity, Family and Community Partnership, Resources]</i>
2. Conduct a cultural proficiency, diversity, equity, and inclusion assessment. <i>[Student Centered, Student Achievement, Equity, Family and Community Partnership, Resources]</i>
3. Build on and expand inclusion and cultural competence training for staff and students.

Superintendent Beaudoin pointed out that students move from an insulated classroom environment in elementary school that has one primary teacher, visiting a specialist each day, to the high school model with several teachers. In between, the district embraced the middle school model that includes a team of consistent teachers for their core subjects. The superintendent said that part of the challenge around SEL structures at the high school level is that student contact with staff is departmentalized. The district is approaching this hurdle with models and interdisciplinary work. This requires staff buy-in from every teacher in a way that is more than just performative. Superintendent Beaudoin said that mind set gains have been made for teachers, and the challenge now is to make headway with structures. The RULER model has

not fit with the time structure of the high school. Within the cultural competency initiative, Ms. Leonard said the district is charged with ensuring that the students' environment is safe, inclusive, and supportive of all learners. If this work is done well, it will enable the district to push its practice forward to authentic learning for staff and students. Ms. Leonard pointed to VOCAL data and said that the student voice is driving consideration of success in reaching objectives. Ms. Leonard highlighted student experiences that have become engrained in the school culture. During every step of a review cycle, an equity lens is employed to examine that curriculum. This will facilitate continued application of the shifted application to the whole of the work. The superintendent said that it boils down to a shift away from designing lessons based on the adult lens to being more aware of the audience and designing lessons and instruction for the breadth of that student audience.

Carry Forward Objectives: Objective 3. Ms. Leonard reiterated that this work is never finished, this objective will challenge the district to consider how training, professional learning, and adult knowledge will continue into the future.

Strategic Initiative 4: Stable Funding. Ensure funding for a stable, multi-year budget and capital improvement plan through collaboration with town and community partners.

3 Year District Objectives
1. Develop and pass a budget that maintains quality and forward progress maintaining efficient practices but shifting to greater advocacy for increased funding to the District.
2. Articulate large and small scale operational and facilities capital needs and obligations. [Student Centered, Student Achievement, Equity, Family and Community Partnerships, Resources]
3. Continue to evolve the central administrative organization structure to efficiently and effectively support district wide improvement goals. [Student Centered, Student Achievement, Resources]
4. Review personnel efficiencies to improve or adjust delivery of programs. [Student Centered, Student Achievement, Equity, Resources]

Superintendent Beaudoin presented an image of funding as the foundation for curriculum and instruction. The superintendent said that the School Committee has been a partner in this goal targeting stable funding for a multi-year budget and a capital improvement plan. This was pursued via collaboration with town and community partners. The superintendent said that the district has been successful at meeting its objectives, if not all deliverables. The last few years have focused on advocacy and problem solving. The district has successfully articulated large and small capital needs and maintains a regularly updated capital plan. This work helped the district successfully navigate the MSBA pipeline. The superintendent also reminded the SC that an early accomplishment in this area was to reorganize central office administration. The next iteration of this work is likely to include targeted modernization of the tools used in the office. This should allow the district to provide additional reporting for transparency. Superintendent

Beaudoin reported that Ms. Cresta hopes to bring payroll in-house, requiring a restructure of software and staffing to support this. The superintendent emphasized that the district regularly pursues efficiencies as a way to reinvest in new needs or innovative practices without adding to the budget.

Carry Forward Objectives: Objectives 1, 2, 4. The superintendent underscored the importance of continued advocacy. An objective will be to maintain and carry forward the capital plan and make it a part of the long-term budget process. Superintendent Beaudoin said that a large accomplishment was the ratification of the Reserve Policy by the School Committee. It will be a guiding document for future budgets, informing how the district should use and maintain these funds. The superintendent said that without a stable budget the district could not focus its energies on curriculum and instruction.

Future Planning: District Improvement Plan 2025-2028. The objectives and deliverables of the next DIP will be informed by data from:

External

- DESE District Review (projected receipt in mid-July)
- DESE Graduation Requirements Guidance
- DESE Tiered Focused Monitoring Results (special education, English language learner, civil rights, ESSA grants (title grants), and on-site review). This is a six-year, cyclical review
- NEASC Elementary Program Review

Internal

- Educator Evaluation and Recent Admin RBT Training
- Student Performance and Growth Data
- Student Enrollment, Attendance, and Survey Data (VOCAL, YRBS, SBIRT, etc.); Class Enrollment; Student Listening Sessions.
- District Patterns and Trends Over Time
- District Curriculum Review Processes
- Community Input

Ms. Leonard said that a lot of day-to-day work is informed by these information sources, but through a wholistic lens. Ms. Leonard said this list is not exhaustive. Addressing recent concern about middle school math, Ms. Leonard said that this single data set would lead to many further considerations, including what it means for performance, classroom enrollment, history of these trends, and where they are likely to go over time. The current math data is exactly the kind that will be incorporated into a curriculum review process and is also something that is addressed day-to-day and week-to-week. Superintendent Beaudoin offered a summer

workshop on data exploration and how it feeds into the curriculum review cycle.

Next Steps: District Improvement Plan 2025-2028:

June-August – data review with leadership team and develop preliminary draft

September – Share preliminary draft of the new DIP at the September 2 school committee meeting and post DIP preliminary draft for public comment between September 3-17

September – October – Review feedback with leadership team and finalize plan. Share final draft at October 21 School Committee meeting

Superintendent Beaudoin stressed that the DIP is a fluid, living document. It is possible that the district will adjust its plans in response to input from governing bodies. However, the superintendent said the district must be vigilant to not over-correct due to concerns that pop up. The superintendent said that the district has tried to move away from individual input to a systemized approach. Ms. Leonard said that she found the DIP's guidance to be critical as a new member of the administration rather than trying implement unique goals. The superintendent stated that guiding documents are critical for providing a consistent, data-driven roadmap for new staff and administrators.

Questions/Comments: Ms. Whitman said she was struck by the conversation about over-correcting for concerns. As an example of the importance of allowing time and space to achieve a desired end, Ms. Whitman said that the first iterations of an aligned M/HS schedule were in response to community input but had aspects that were not palatable. By continuing to pursue the best path, the district was able to craft an alignment that can be built upon for the long term. Ms. Whitman said that the district was responsive to the community, but the response was better for not happening overnight. This is also the case for library and world language endeavors. Ms. Whitman said this is important insight for SC members and can facilitate budget advocacy. Ms. Whitman stated that it demonstrates responsible stewardship over multiple years of difficulty. During upcoming budget work with town partners, Ms. Whitman hopes to benefit from the unique voice and experience of Ms. Cresta.

Ms. Koch-Sundquist was impressed by insight into the importance of the foundational work that goes into supporting the program and found the presentation to be easy to understand. Ms. Leonard and Superintendent Beaudoin created a clear link between higher level functions and how they support the daily work of teachers in the classroom. Ms. Koch-Sundquist said

it was very helpful to receive this information, from the perspective of the top down, because there is too much happening at every level for SC members to keep track. Ms. Koch-Sundquist expressed the hope that the community would dig into this presentation.

Ms. Wetzler asked for increased clarity on the connection between the DIP perspective presented and the Vision of the Graduate. Ms. Wetzler said that the Vision is especially important given world events and said that this must be continually marketed to the community.

Ms. Banks echoed the need for insight into the interaction of the DIP and the Vision of the Graduate and received clarification on how carry-over objectives will be accounted for in the new DIP. Ms. Banks reiterated the importance of Initiative 4 and thanked the School Committee members for their work to educate the public regarding what the budget is about. Ms. Banks asked the superintendent how SC members can assist, as soon as possible, with the continued work to educate year-round about the work being done by the district and the importance of funding.

Mr. Reed agreed that this is an ongoing challenge for the School Committee. There is a lot of information that can be difficult to understand for those unfamiliar with the operations of the district. Mr. Reed recommended that SC members continue to engage with the public.

Ms. Banks urged methods of consistently communicating through concrete channels, including regular articles in The Cricket newspaper. Ms. Banks credited articulation and communication with successful passage of the budget.

Mr. Foster thanked administration for presenting the big picture examples that are the key to telling the story of the district's educational program. Mr. Foster emphasized that he wants to share those stories, especially as the presented narrative translates educational lingo into terms that are easily understood by all. Mr. Foster said the presentation showed the work that had been done, as experienced by students, and the progress made as a district which includes changes. Mr. Foster asked where the reference sources could be found. Ms. Leonard replied that all references are included in the SC meeting materials appendix, including the arts summary. All reports are available on the district website under the curriculum tab. Superintendent Beaudoin said that the website is being updated, with rollout planned for the fall, and it should be possible to make these reports easier to find. Mr. Foster expressed concern about mention of "traditional practices" given authentic learning objectives. Mr. Foster said that the district should take the opportunity to build in next steps around big picture issues previously discussed by the SC. This would include defining metrics of success, if the MCAS is no longer the bar, particularly in the context of the vision of the graduate, and authentic learning.

Mr. Foster asked what could be tracked and what can be conveyed to the community about metrics of success, beyond real estate prices and MCAS. Mr. Foster also suggested formalizing response to community input during the budget process. Mr. Foster also sought clarification on when the new DIP will be released to the public and expressed the desire to have the SC respond to it first. Ms. Leonard said that release of the DIP to the public is not geared to taking in early feedback and is a new opportunity to solicit the community voice. Superintendent Beaudoin said they are seeking input about clarity not content. The superintendent said that SC input is built into the creation of the DIP, and the timeline is fairly loose. Superintendent Beaudoin said that it is within the leadership team's purview to craft the DIP. The superintendent has first approval, and the School Committee has final approval.

Mr. Reed said that the DIP review reflected the progress made over the last three years and thanked the staff and administration for their work.

b. School Committee Planning

i. End-of-Year/Summer Schedule –

1. Auditor's Report – moved to August 19 School Committee meeting. The superintendent said that the district is obligated to present it at a meeting. With Ms. Cresta out of the office, the superintendent plans to wait until August for the presentation.
2. June 10, 2025 potential School Committee meeting – Superintendent Beaudoin shared that only voucher approval remains on the agenda for this potential meeting date. Mr. Foster stated that it is his understanding that the School Committee should have insight into the superintendent search by the end of June. Mr. Foster said that June 7 could be used to explore other issues. The superintendent said that there is a summer workshop proceeding the August meeting that could be used for this. Ms. Whitman pointed out that there are two building committee meetings in July.
3. Superintendent Cycle – Mr. Reed stated that there is a general cycle for superintendent review. Due to the budget cycle, work has not started on the evaluation and assessment of the superintendent's goals necessary to have a meaningful conversation on evaluation. Mr. Reed said this could be pushed to summer business. Superintendent Beaudoin replied that she plans to complete her self-reflection by the end of June. The School Committee would then complete its process by August. Superintendent Beaudoin iterated that she is willing to extend her current contract through FY2027, allowing her to see through the Essex Elementary building project. There is usually a two-year evaluation cycle, and the superintendent is currently in a contract extension. Mr. Foster received

confirmation that the conversation can be held in an open business meeting during the summer. Superintendent Beaudoin stated that the current discussion would be around staying for one more year - FY 2027. The superintendent summarized that her last contract was for 2019-2024. It was auto extended to 2025, and then a one-year extension was added. Rather than a new five-year contract, the superintendent would be interested in a year-to-year extension.

4. Subcommittee Goals – Superintendent Beaudoin shared Triton School District’s approach. They have a synopsis of each subcommittee as part of a School Committee handbook. If unable to re-organize following town elections, Triton has new SC members take the vacated seats from outgoing SC members until reorganization is possible. Ms. Whitman said that waiting for August would allow better understanding of the subcommittees and the interests of new SC members.
5. Number-Crunching Group – Mr. Foster stated that the number-crunching group replaces the old collaboration group and holds public meetings. Their June meeting will inform planning for next year’s budget cycle. Superintendent Beaudoin said that the tentative agenda for this meeting includes timelines, expectations, and goals. Ms. Whitman said that those topics are appropriate for the chair and vicechair to attend. Finance subcommittee members could then fill those roles after reorganization. Superintendent Beaudoin noted that the Triton district has specific protocol for how town boards request information from each other. The superintendent said such guidelines are helpful for limiting time spent on process discussions. Ms. Whitman asked for clarification that other topics had been resolved before determining who would serve on the number-crunching group. Superintendent Beaudoin summarized that the SC does not have a quorum for a June 10 meeting, and the number-crunching group will move forward with scheduling a meeting.

Ms. Whitman moved to have Mr. Foster and Mr. Reed represent Essex and Manchester at the number-crunching group meeting. Ms. Koch-Sundquist seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Binieris was present for the vote.

- 10) School Committee Comment** – Ms. Whitman encouraged the new SC members to attend the MASC training as soon as possible, stating that it is beneficial for understanding the purview of the School Committee and its responsibilities. Ms. Whitman shared that she participated in the mental health first aid training organized by Cami Molinari and recommended it highly. Superintendent Beaudoin said that the

only date with a quorum is currently August 19. School Committee members pledged to review options on the shared availability document distributed by the superintendent to determine potential meeting dates. Mr. Reed congratulated Ms. Banks and Ms. Wetzler for their election to the School Committee and extended congratulations to all the district's advancing students, from fifth grade through senior year.

C. Adjourn

Mr. Reed moved to adjourn the School Committee business meeting; Ms. Wetzler seconded the motion.

The motion passed 6-0. Ms. Koch-Sundquist was not present for the vote.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:02 pm

School Committee Future Meetings

- August 19, 2025