Barnstable School Committee Roadmap

Developed Summer 2025

Background

The School Committee for Barnstable Public Schools (BPS) developed a roadmap for the next five to ten years that captures the big picture goals of the School Committee within their purview (e.g., establishing policy, setting the budget, hiring/supervision of the Superintendent, linkage to broader community) and directs the Superintendent's work. It intentionally does not delve deeply into implementation or procedural details.

This roadmap was developed in the spring and summer of 2025 through an assessment (consisting of research and interviews with five School Committee members, the Superintendent, and the Deputy Director for School Finance) and two workshops with those identified above. A summary of the assessment is in the assessment report.

Barnstable Public Schools Strengths

The Barnstable Public Schools believes in a student-centered school culture and strives to create a safe and healthy learning environment in which students are challenged, supported, and engaged.

We are the largest and most diverse school system on Cape Cod with the greatest course offerings and opportunities for students.

The School Committee is always striving to leverage its strengths, improve where needed, and plan for uncertainty. In that vein, the School Committee's priorities and direction for the next five to ten years are outlined below.

School Committee Priorities and Direction

Student performance, attraction and retention

Education outcomes for students at all levels are a priority for the School Committee. Education outcomes are primarily under the oversight of the Superintendent and covered in the District Improvement Plan (DIP), and initiatives are approved annually by the School Committee. Barnstable Public Schools ("BPS") are at risk of losing students due to the School Choice option and declining numbers of school-aged children on Cape Cod, so student attraction and retention are a priority. Student behavior and discipline were previously a concern for the School Committee, but both have improved in recent years.

Interests:

- Maintain student enrollment and funding availability through Chapter 70 funding formulas.

- Improve academic rigor and education outcomes for all students, including English as an Additional Language, students with Individualized Education Plans or 504 plans, and the highest-performing students.
- Prepare all students for school, the military, and/or work after graduation.
- Attract students to the District based on strong academics and extracurriculars such as athletics and the arts.

School Committee Direction:

A. Maintain funding for curriculum reviews to improve education outcomes and retain students.

B. Review and update/create policies related to student performance.

C. Maintain funding for extracurriculars to retain students.

D. Review the District Improvement Plan (DIP) goals and monitor the Superintendent's progress on improving education outcomes.

E. If needed, revisit the topic of disciplinary actions. Progress has been made and no action is needed at this time.

Workforce morale, attraction and retention

To date, BPS has been mostly able to hire needed staff, with the exception of hiring challenges for the lowest salaried positions, e.g., bus professionals, summer programming, para-professionals, and some specialized positions (Speech and Language Pathologists, School Psychologists). As Cape Cod becomes an increasingly expensive place to live, it may become harder to hire staff.

Administrative positions have been challenging to fill. These positions are important for the stability of the District.

The School Committee is concerned that staff attendance rates are low, which is consistent with lower attendance rates seen across the state.

Housing is perceived to be one of the major challenges of workforce attraction and retention.

Interests:

- Engaged and motivated teachers, and higher teacher/staff attendance rates.
- Ability to hire staff at all levels in the future.
- Leadership stability.

School Committee Direction:

A. Improve teacher/staff attendance rates, e.g., explore root causes of teacher/staff absenteeism.

B. Improve housing access for staff, e.g.,
    - Work with the Town Manager and Town Council leadership and advocate for inclusion in the Seasonal Communities Act, which would secure additional resources for housing in Barnstable.
    - Communicate housing needs with community members and community organizations.

C. Improve hiring ability and retention for harder-to-hire roles.
D. Provide professional development, mentoring and opportunities for staff to move into administrator roles.

Budget constraints

There are numerous budget constraints facing the Town of Barnstable in the next five years and thus BPS, as taxpayer dollars are divided in a 60%/40% BPS-municipal spending manner. Budget pressures include the end of federal COVID funds (ESSER), a required septic expenditure for the town, and the reduction of state education funds. Chapter 70 funding formula for state reimbursement continues to not favor BPS. The School Committee believes that BPS does not have an issue with overspending.

There is little communication among the School Committee and Town Council regarding funding. The Superintendent and Town Manager communicate regularly regarding funding.

Interests:

- Reliable funding for important activities, e.g., curriculum reviews, extracurriculars, staff positions.
- Realism about what residents will support when considering budget requests.

School Committee Direction:

A. Work with the Town Manager and Town Council to raise awareness of BPS's financial health and anticipated needs, and discuss options, e.g., reassessing the 60%40% split, putting a Proposition 2.5 override on the ballot for sewer work to free up funding for BPS. e.g.,
    - School Committee Chair meets with the Town Council Leadership, Superintendent, and Town Manager.
    - Join the Town Council's discussions on financial priorities.

B. Educate the public about what the schools stand to lose if a Proposition 2.5 override is not considered for either sewer or school needs, i.e., what services from BPS would be lost.

C. Advocate through letter writing to the Legislature in support of re-evaluating the Chapter 70 funding formulas to increase state reimbursement and other funding opportunities that arise (e.g. Circuit breaker funding, special education review, Federal fund implications).

D. Conduct forward-looking and big picture budget planning, e.g.,
    - Develop goals (e.g., special projects, facilities plan), a budget for those goals, and potential ways to access funding.
    - Develop a financial policy, e.g. we will not let savings drop below $X, we will spend $Y per year on capital projects.

Facilities management

About 65% of the school buildings have lived through their full life cycle and most interviewees shared the need for improvements. No facilities plan exists that outlines both the needs and also prioritized sequencing for building upkeep and/or potential new construction.

Interests:

- Implementing proactive and holistic approach rather than "waiting for things to fail."
- Gaining a full understanding of facility needs and expected costs of maintenance over time to better be able to weigh options.
- Developing a Facilities Plan that benefits all students and schools, and considers population projections.
- Working to assure facilities that are competitive with other districts.

School Committee Direction:

A. Obtain more capacity within the BPS maintenance department.
    - Create a pipeline for maintenance positions, e.g., partner with licensure programs, develop an internship program for those with high school degrees.
    - Explore consolidation of the BPS maintenance department into the Town Department of Public Works.
    - Provide more support for the maintenance department.

B. Understand the need and cost: Facilities director develops recommended actions for all facilities that is prioritized in terms of action needed and realistic. The 2023 assessment can be used as a base document. Use this to compare expected cost for maintenance and new buildings.

C. Discuss facilities needs at School Committee meetings to raise awareness of the need for maintenance and potential need for a new school.

D. Expand community engagement: Share the needs and hear feedback from families, teachers, and other stakeholders.

E. Continue to pursue facilities funding opportunities. Options include state funding opportunities, e.g., Accelerator Repair Program.

External relations with teachers, press, families, and residents

The School Committee is the link between the community and the school district. There is little communication between the School Committee and Town Council about BPS's financial stability and needs. Public perception and press coverage of BPS could be improved.

Interests:

- Increased understanding of the value BPS provides the community. Share and showcase BPS strengths and plans for addressing concerns.
- School Committee and Town Council and Town Manager have a shared understanding of BPS's financial picture.

School Committee Direction:

- Increase communication and coordination with the Town Council and Town Manager through:
    - Meet regularly with Superintendent School Committee Chair, Town Council Leadership, and Town Manager
    - Share brief updates at other's meetings.

- Articulate the value of BPS:
    - Highlight career pathway programs, diverse student body, academic options.
    - Develop and publicize a list of metrics of success beyond MCAS scores, e.g., number of certificates students graduate with, list of colleges, college graduation rates, and graduate employment statistics.
    - Work with the media consultant to develop ads for social media and other outlets.
    - Work with the Superintendent to highlight and leverage strong extracurriculars.

Implementation

The Superintendent and School Committee Chair will create an implementation plan for this Roadmap with specific actions, roles, and timelines.

The School Committee discussed reviewing this Roadmap annually to evaluate progress and discuss updates. More conversation may be needed to finalize this approach.