

**GROTON BOARD OF EDUCATION
COW MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 8, 2025 @ 6:00 P.M.
CENTRAL OFFICE, ROOM 11/HYBRID**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Beverly Washington – Chairperson, Adrian Johnson – Vice Chairperson, Andrea Ackerman (remote), Sean Corcoran (remote) Ian Thomas (remote), Jay Weitlauf (remote), Jennifer White, Michael Whitney

ALSO PRESENT: Susan Austin, Lauren Casini, Denise Doolittle, Sam Kilpatrick, Shannon Weigle

I. CALL TO ORDER – Beverly Washington – Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

II. GMS AND FHS DATA REVIEW AND STUDENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN (Attachment #1)

Mr. Peter Bass, Principal, Sam Singleton, Keith Danieluk, and Caitlyn Crowley gave an extensive overview of the PowerPoint presentation of the GMS Data Review and the Student Improvement Plan.

Mr. Matt Brown, Principal, Adam Diskin, Amy McKenna, and Carmita Hodge gave an extensive overview of the PowerPoint presentation of the FHS Data Review and the Student Improvement Plan.

III. FOLLOW-UP OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PLAN (Attachment #2)

Karen Hyatt, Jane Robert, Rita Mangelinkx, Elizabeth Hutchins, Shannon Weigle gave an extensive overview of Early Childhood Plan and the Smart Start Grant and Early Start funding and staffing. These grants will be used for programs at MM.

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Ackerman, Whitney

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 p.m.
PASSED - UNANIMOUSLY



**GMS/FHS Data Review
&
School Improvement Plan**

December 8, 2025

GPS Strategic Plan Pillars

1



Accelerate Academic Achievement



2



Cultivate a Rich and Vibrant Learning Community



3

Strengthen Pathways that Develop Post Secondary Readiness



4

Attract and Grow A Skilled and Supported Workforce



5

Improve Operational Efforts and Increase Fiscal Responsibility



Key Performance Indicators

Academics	Attendance	Behavior	College and Career Readiness	Communications & Climate
Accountability Index	Average Daily Attendance	# of Incidents of In-School Suspensions	% On-track for Graduation	% of K-5 Students Who Can Identify a Trusted Adult
DPI- ELA	% of Students Chronically Absent	# of Incidents of Out of School Suspensions	% Taking CCR Courses	% of 6-12 Students Who Can Identify a Trusted Adult
DPI- Math	Average # of Staff Absences		Postsecondary Entrance	% of Staff Reporting PD is Connected to Position
DPI- Science			4-Year Graduation Rate	% of Parents Who Believe there are Opportunities for Caregiver Involvement

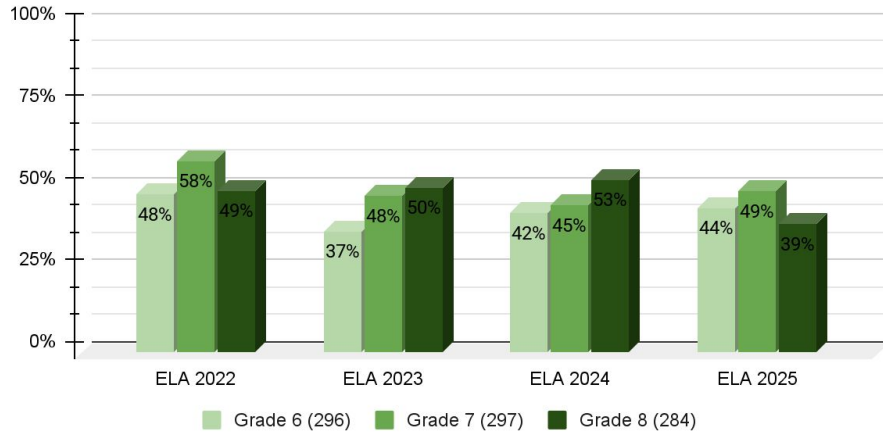
Groton Middle School: Who We Are...

School Enrollment	886
Special Programming	A continuum of supports including special educators, speech pathologists, school psychologists, school social workers, school counselors, OTs, and PTs, and are available to meet the needs of all students with disabilities.
Student Makeup	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 46% Free/Reduced Eligible● 19% Special Education● 5% Multilingual learners
Chronic Absenteeism Trend	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 2023- 26.1%● 2024- 20.2%● 2025- 20.4%
Noteworthy Happenings	<p>“Fostering a culture of high engagement and deep inquiry, while ensuring students receive the targeted social-emotional support necessary to thrive”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Student engagement through STEAM and MYP● Increased focus on getting students to attend and be engaged in classroom instruction (94.7% daily attendance to date compared to 85% at this time last year)● Lt. Governor Bysiewicz kicks off her annual Computing Challenge at GMS tomorrow

Accelerate Academic Achievement

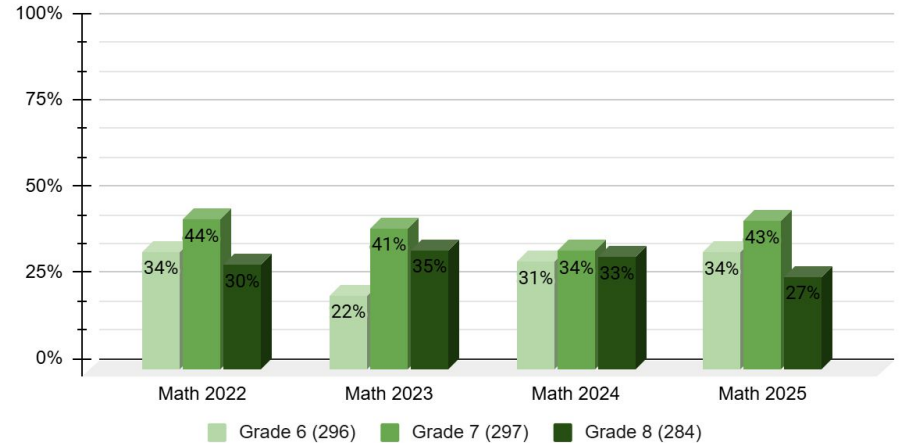
Groton Middle School SBAC Over Time

Students At or Above Benchmark



Groton Middle School SBAC Over Time

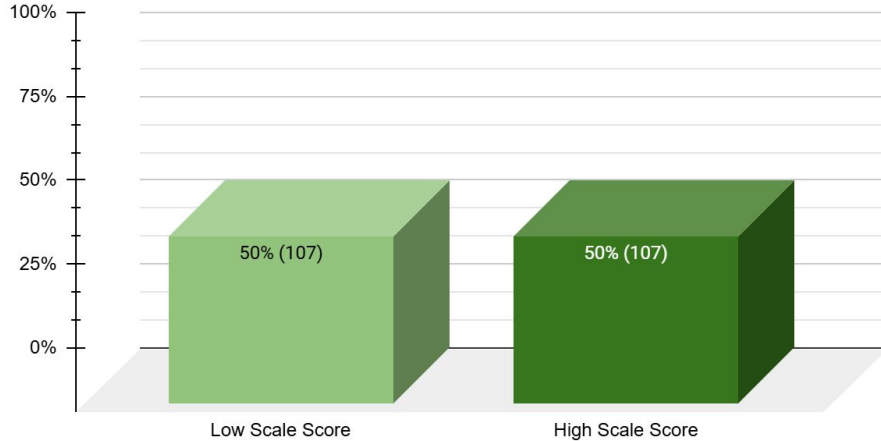
Students At or Above Benchmark



Accelerate Academic Achievement

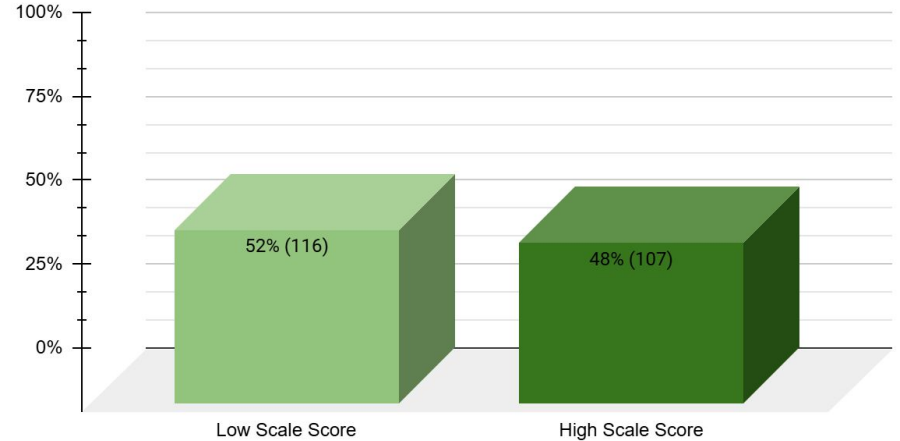
Groton Middle School ELA Performance

Students Approaching Benchmark (217)



Groton Middle School Math Performance

Students Approaching Benchmark (223)

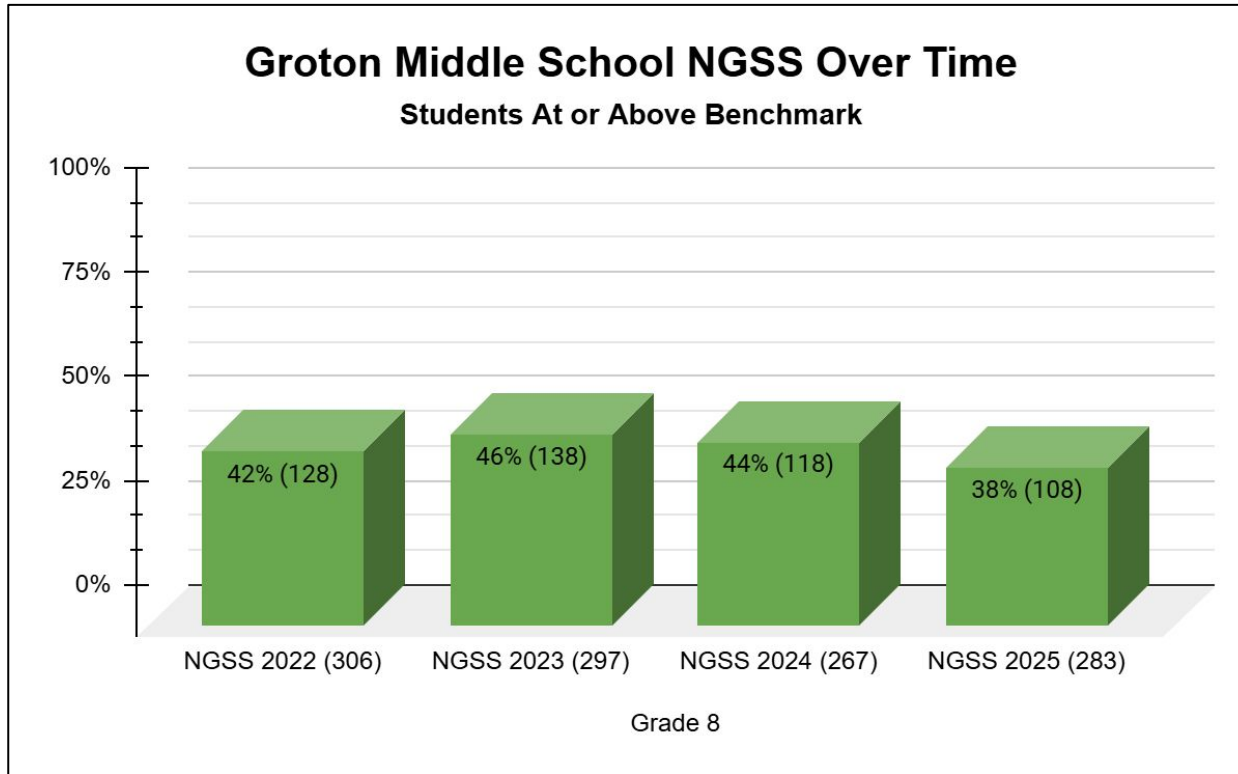


Accelerate Academic Achievement

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	Not Meeting Benchmark	Approaching Benchmark	Meeting Benchmark	Exceeding Benchmark
6	31%	24%	29%	16%
7	26%	25%	36%	13%
8	35%	25%	26%	13%
Grand Total	31%	25%	30%	14%

MATHEMATICS	Not Meeting Benchmark	Approaching Benchmark	Meeting Benchmark	Exceeding Benchmark
6	35%	30%	19%	15%
7	32%	24%	27%	17%
8	50%	23%	14%	13%
Grand Total	39%	26%	20%	15%

Accelerate Academic Achievement



Accelerate Academic Achievement

2024-2025 Action Steps:

Supporting Teaching and Learning

- Further expansion / implementation and support of Building Thinking Classrooms (BTC) in Math classes (Grade 7)
- Continued usage of *DreamBox* for all students
- Work to identify a progress monitoring resource to support Language Arts instruction / intervention

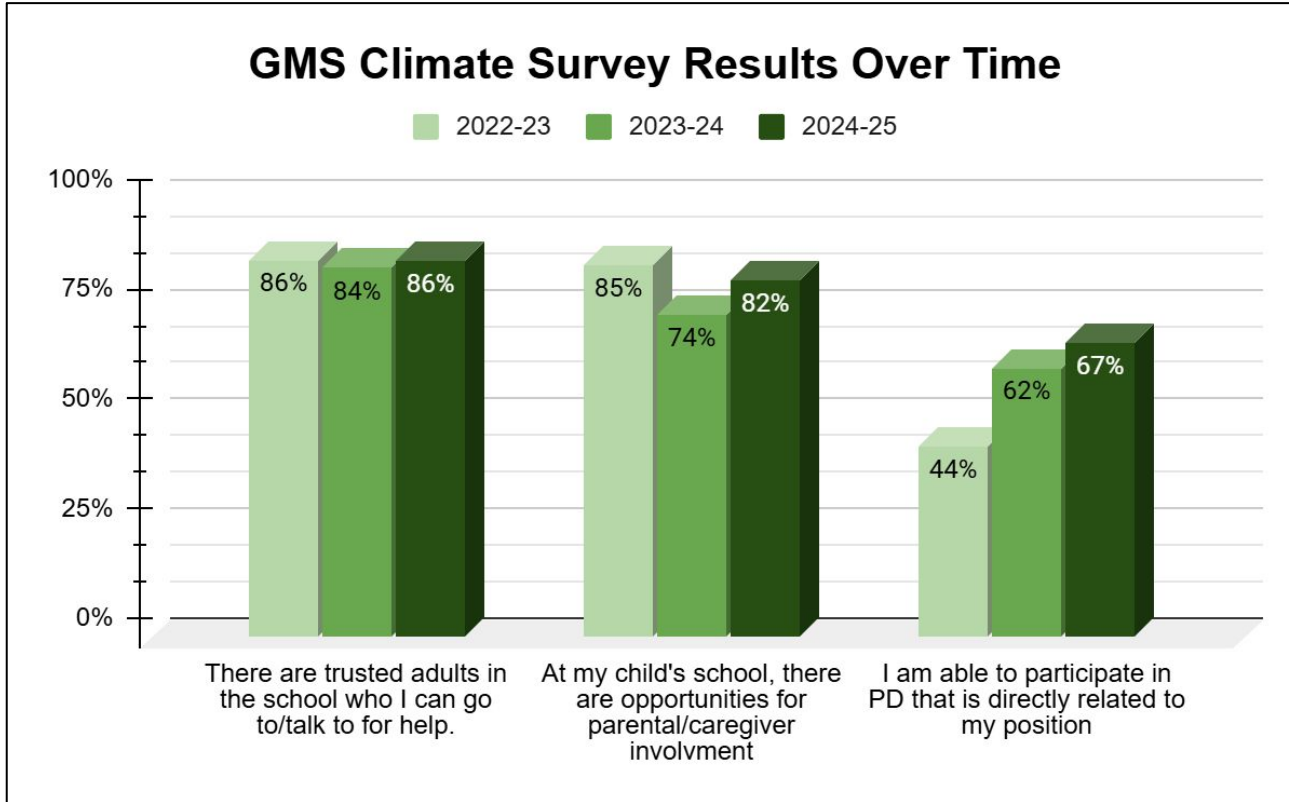
Outcome:

- BTC was largely utilized in Grade 7. Rough cohort data from grade 6 2024-25 to grade 7 2025-26 showed a 12 point increase for students scoring at or above benchmark. This led us to further expand our BTC professional development for all GMS math teachers in 2025-26.
- *Dreambox* proved not to meet our needs for progress monitoring for math instruction which resulted in our shift to utilizing *i-Ready* as a math resource in 2025-26.
- *CommonLit* was identified as a progress monitoring and intervention resource for Language Arts to inform instruction and intervention. This is being piloted in 2025-26.

Accelerate Academic Achievement

District Priorities	School Action Steps
<p>Ensure a comprehensive, standards-aligned curricula for all students, PreK-Grade 12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pilot Illustrative Math (IM) and train teachers in Building Thinking Classrooms (BTC) in alignment with the GPS Math Enhancement Plan - Implement the use of iReady (Math) diagnostic tool and personalized learning online resource - Implement use of Science Notebooks (Sketchnotes) in all grade levels - Pilot CommonLit (ELA Resource) and aligned formative assessments
<p>Provide engaging, student-centered instruction that promotes active learning and meaningful connections</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement inquiry-based learning, project-based learning (MYP, BTC, STEAM) - Integrate the use of AI in language arts, social studies and science classrooms to enhance content and instruction
<p>Use district, school, and classroom assessment data to make informed decisions about instruction and improve student outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Administer common formative assessments (e.g., Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs), i-Ready (Math) and CommonLit (ELA)) to monitor progress and effectiveness of instruction - Utilize data team meetings to analyze student data and adjust instruction - Utilize the district assessment calendar to guide regular data collection and to support progress monitoring and intervention planning
<p>Ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities, including differentiated interventions and multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use benchmark formative assessment data to Identify and support students who need tiered intervention; review tiered intervention placement in Math and Language Arts on a quarterly basis

Cultivate a Rich & Vibrant Learning Community



Cultivate a Rich & Vibrant Learning Community

District Priorities	School Action Steps
<p>Prioritize the physical and mental well-being of staff and students through supportive programs and initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement monthly safety drills in coordination with first responders - Implement weekly advisory to build relationships and support SEL curriculum. - Provide wraparound services through partnership with SBHC and other outside agencies. - Implement GMS Caring Adult Initiative.
<p>Ensure students have at least one trusted adult who cares about them and knows their name, strengths, and story</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use caring adult survey data to identify students in need of additional support. - Analyze student survey data and match staff to students in need and implement identified Tier 2 strategies. - Re-administer student survey in February to assess effectiveness of strategies.
<p>Foster meaningful family and community engagement through accessible, frequent, and welcoming communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use ParentSquare for direct communication for school and community events, updates and important notices. Messages are received in the recipient's chosen language. - Host Community events throughout the school year; Open House, Breakfast with Santa, Family Trivia Night, School Play and Musical, Chorus and Band Concerts, Staff/Student Basketball game, Talent Show, Pasta Dinner, etc.
<p>Encourage students to use SEL strategies to build healthy identities, manage emotions, build empathy, maintain positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and achieve goals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement Weekly <i>Second Step</i> Advisory Lessons - Implement Quarterly SOAR Team Meetings - Grade 6 area of focus - cultivating an inclusive and safe learning environment through various community building activities

Cultivate a Rich & Vibrant Learning Community

District Priorities	School Action Steps
Empower student and educator agency by providing opportunities for voice, leadership, and celebrations of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff School Leadership Team - Staff Safe School Climate - Team Meetings - Recognize Students of the Quarter - Share student success and achievements on the morning announcements - Post Honor Roll lists on screens around the building each quarter; letter home to each family - Student Council membership is open to all GMS students
Increase student and staff engagement by emphasizing the importance of daily attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Post student names for monthly high attendance (95% & higher) on screens around the building; enter these students in a drawing to receive a prize each month. - Establish and emphasize consistently the importance of attendance on morning announcements and daily message boards. "School is better with you." - Maximize instructional time by adopting and implementing an electronic hall pass system and clarify the role of SEL tutors in supporting on task behaviors, primarily in the classroom - Implement Tier 1 Attendance Training Modules with staff - Initiate and Implement School Attendance Team which meets weekly

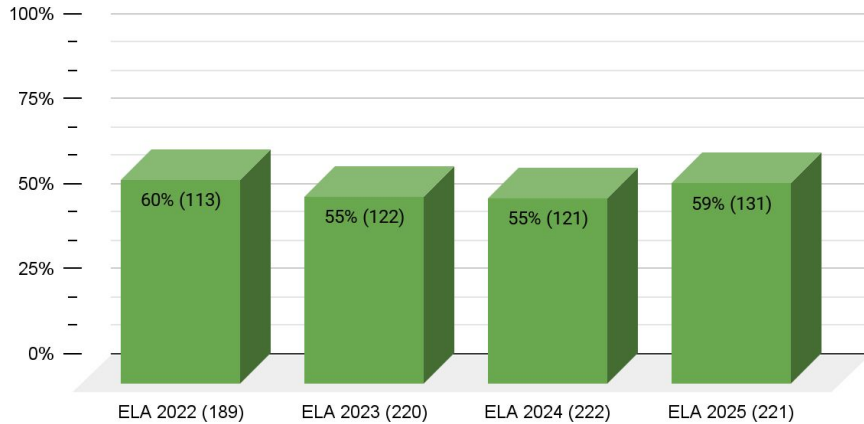
Fitch High School: Who We Are...

School Enrollment	907
Special Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• AP, ECE, IB (MYP, DP & CP)• Pathways: (NJROTC, Nursing/EMT, EdRising, Engineering (PLTW), Manufacturing)• Outstanding opportunities for our students through arts, athletics, clubs and activities
Student Makeup	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 49% Free/Reduced Eligible• 16% Special Education• 4% Limited English Proficiency
Chronic Absenteeism Trend	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2023- 25.8%• 2024- 24.9%• 2025- 26.3%
Noteworthy Happenings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participation has steadily increased in our program offerings. Our dual enrollment course offerings have expanded along with participants. Our MYP personal project engagement has steadily increased with a school-wide audience for presentations.

Accelerate Academic Achievement

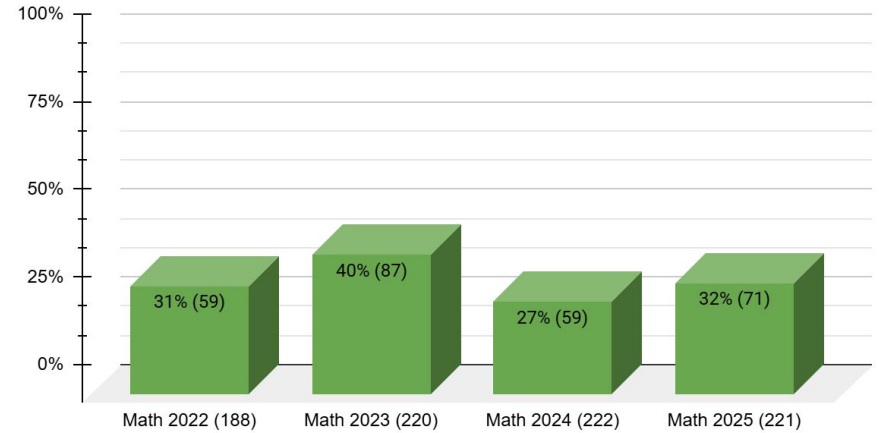
Fitch High School SAT Results Over Time

Students At or Above Benchmark



Fitch High School SAT Results Over Time

Student At or Above Benchmark



ERW SAT (Class of 2026)

59% Reached Benchmark
Typical Growth per year = 30 points
Fitch grew by 44 points

Fitch vs. State

BM = 460



ERW PSAT SCORE

520
500
480
460
440
420
400

Fall '22

Spr '23

Fall '23

Spr '24

Fall '24

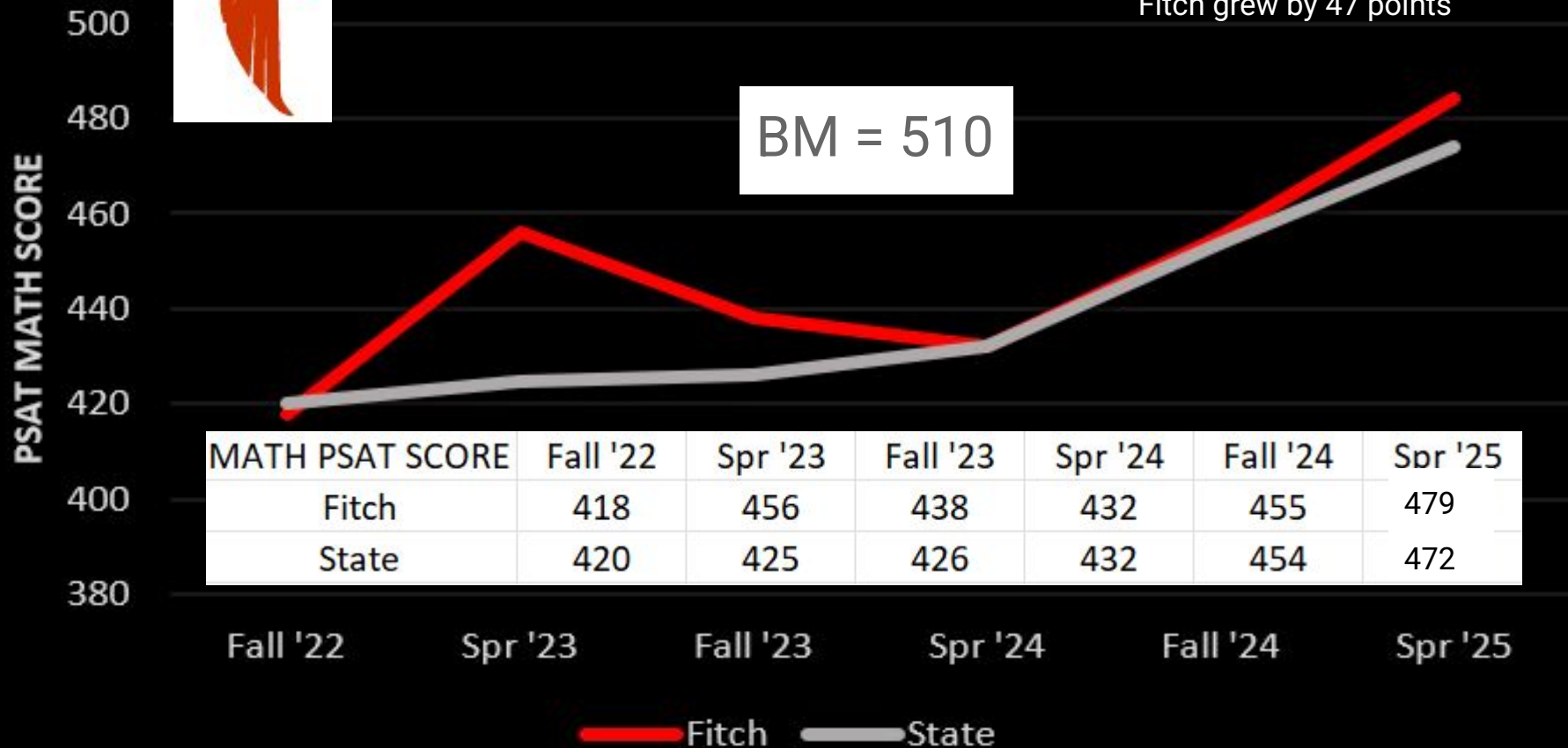
Spr '25

English PSAT	Fall 22	Spr 23	Fall 23	Spr 24	Fall 24	Spr 25
Fitch	418	445	447	455	472	499
State	422	428	432	456	475	497



Math SAT (Class of 2026)

31% Reached Benchmark
Typical Growth per year = 30 pts.
Fitch grew by 47 points

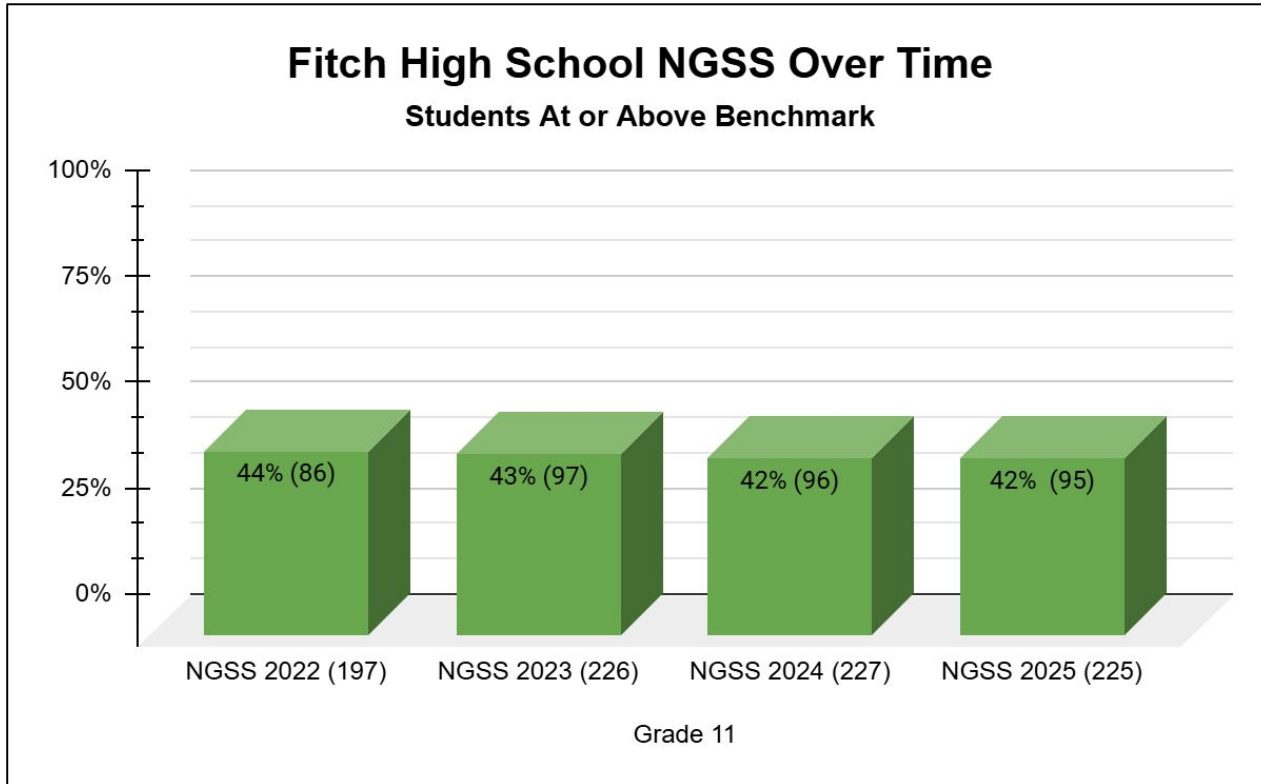


Accelerate Academic Achievement (2025 SAT)

Evidence-Based Reading and Writing	Not Meeting Benchmark	Approaching Benchmark	Meeting Benchmark	Exceeding Benchmark
Percentage	23%	17%	45%	14%
Student Count (221)	52	38	100	31

Mathematics	Not Meeting Benchmark	Approaching Benchmark	Meeting Benchmark	Exceeding Benchmark
Percentage	30%	38%	23%	9%
Student Count (221)	67	83	52	19

Accelerate Academic Achievement



Fitch AP Scores

Year	# of Tests Taken	Average
2023	543	2.38
2024	614	2.50
2025	713	2.60

2024 Average is 3.1

Fitch IB Scores

Seniors take the test

Year	# of Tests Taken	Average
2023	48	4.50
2024	128	4.28
2025	102	3.25

2024 World Average is 4.7

Information from the 2024-2025 UConn ECE Data Report

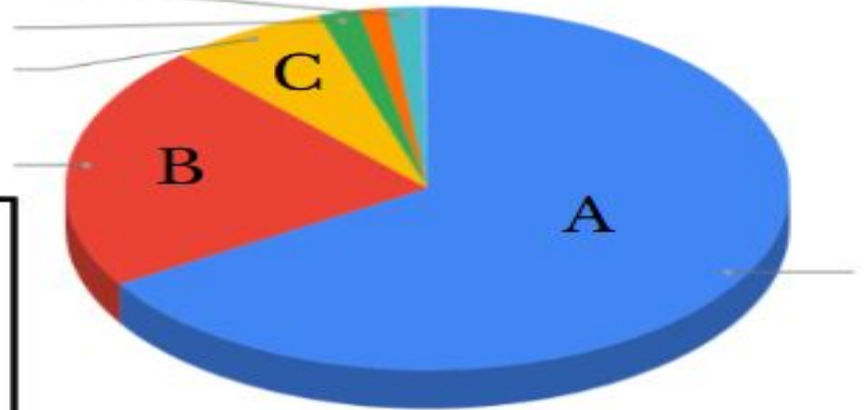
ECE Grade BREAKDOWN

328 students enrolled in an ECE class

- 217 students got an A - 66.2%
- 72 students got an B - 22%
- 23 students got an C - 7%
- 6 students got an D - 1.8%
- 4 students got an F - 1.2%
- 5 students got an S 1.5%
- 1 student withdrew

312 students received credit worthy grades

95% of enrolled students earned college credit



In 2022-2023 = 151 credit worthy grades

Accelerate Academic Achievement (24-25 Action Steps)

- Established a **proactive** posture to its **Attendance Policy**.
- **Celebrate RISE**, growth and increase **Falcon Pride**
 - Increase Resilience Through Independent Struggle
- Continued Commitment to **No Cell Phones** during Instruction
- Utilize CTL & **Student Leaders** to:
 - **Guide students** on logging into College Board, link to Khan Academy & Set goals
- Improve **Tier 1 Instruction** - Commit to inquiry using NUA & BTC strategies
- Continue common **data team** process
- Continue to improve **MTSS(SRBI)** system
- Add **incentives** to meeting benchmark in ELA, Math, & Science (NGSS) to increase students' personal investment in high test performance

Accelerate Academic Achievement (outcome)

- **Positive SAT Growth:**
 - **1st in our DRG in Math:** 30 points higher average than any other school. 43 points higher than the District Reference Group (DRG) average.
 - **2nd in our DRG in EBRW** - 30 points above DRG average.
- More than **double the number** of ECE Credits earned (2025- 312 vs. 2023 - 151)
- **Large increase** in AP/IB Test Participation
 - Average AP score has increased along with the increased participation
- **25 Seniors** earned their **Seal of Biliteracy**
- **Career Pathways & IB CP** are steadily **expanding**
 - Potential to identify other Pathways we may already offer

Accelerate Academic Achievement

District Priorities

School Action Steps 2025-2026

Ensure a comprehensive, standards-aligned curricula for all students, PreK-Grade 12

- Collaborating with **department chairs and curriculum** department to ensure up to date curriculum is on **dashboard**.
- Preparing updated curriculum for next NEASC visit, including embedding the **Vision of the Graduate** on each district map. Began work with **NEASC & IB to collaboratively get Accreditation** in same visits.

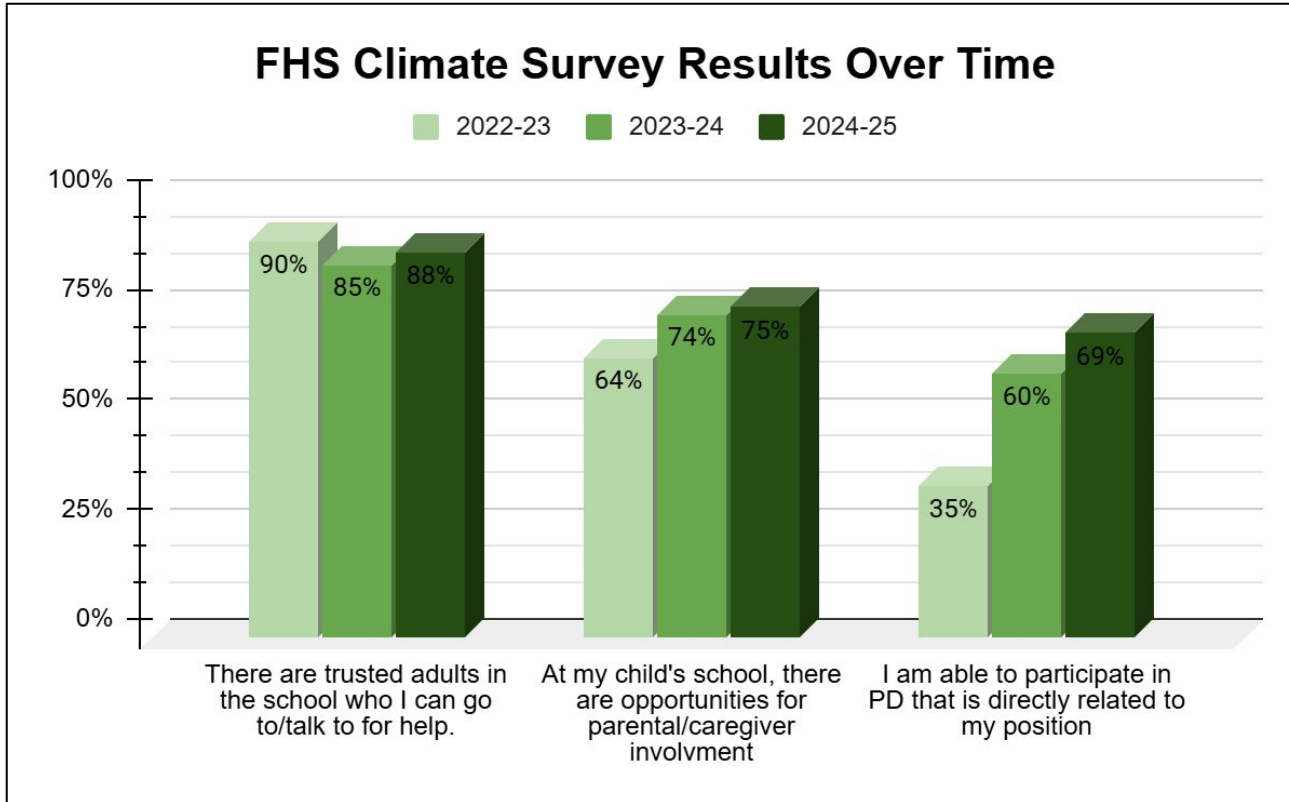
Provide engaging, student-centered instruction that promotes active learning and meaningful connections

- Continuing **professional partnerships** to build literacy, numeracy, and pathways in the school, with a focus on making learning a more active and student centered process (BTC and Dr. Toby Emert).
- Using **academic walkthroughs** and **mini observations** to engage with teachers on how they build meaningful connections to course content with individual students.

Accelerate Academic Achievement

District Priorities	School Action Steps 2025-2026
Use district, school, and classroom assessment data to make informed decisions about instruction and improve student outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Professional Development workshops for core academic departments on the SAT, including time to examine post-test data.● Dedicated collaboration time for forming and/or reviewing common formative assessments, including performance tasks and exams.
Ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities, including differentiated interventions and multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Expanded our Tier One strategies for ABCs (attendance, behavior, credits) so that all staff members are stakeholders in student success.● Building on existing pro-active student support teams (AP/Counselor teams) to identify students with needs and match them with successful interventions, including developing the SBAT (school based attendance team) to expand this work.

Cultivate a Rich & Vibrant Learning Community



Cultivate a Rich & Vibrant Community

Student Survey

Positive Change evident in **every** survey question

Increase in connections to clubs/ activities by 8.3% (78.3%)

Parent Survey

Positive Change in 15 of 16 questions (compared to 2023)

21% Increase in communication through Parent Square

Staff Survey

Growth noted in overall respectful atmosphere in the school (15% increase)

23% Increase in our efforts with truancy

Wellness and Student/Staff Respect - Educator's Handbook Analysis (2023 - 2025)

343 less reports of cutting class, 127 less incidents of defiance and 13 less incidents (11) of altercations

Cultivate a Rich & Vibrant Learning Community

District Priorities	School Action Steps
<p>Prioritize the physical and mental well-being of staff and students through supportive programs and initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Cell Phone Policy - Securely Pass System and Monitoring of bathrooms - Falcon Fridays, Spirit Weeks, Pep Rally, morning music, etc. - Mini Observation Process - Self Care Expo - EOF Feeding Our Falcons
<p>Ensure students have at least one trusted adult who cares about them and knows their name, strengths, and story</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ABC Chats- with every student every month - Discuss staying on track with Attendance, Behaviors, Credits and Connections. - EOF Caring Connectors
<p>Foster meaningful family and community engagement through accessible, frequent, and welcoming communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weekly News From the Nest - Fitch Expo Night , Orientations, Conference Nights, and Open House (Student led events) - Hosting multiple “same night” events

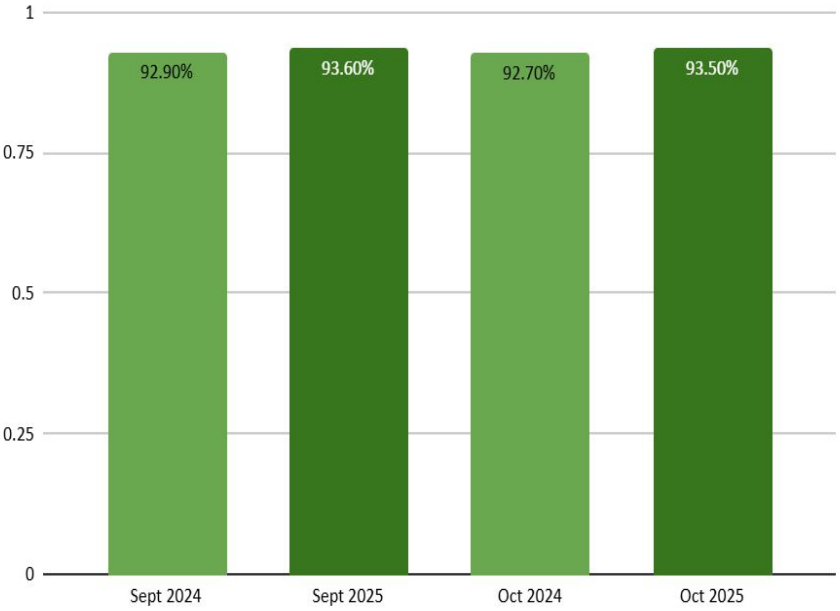
Cultivate a Rich & Vibrant Learning Community

District Priorities	School Action Steps
Encourage students to use SEL strategies to build healthy identities, manage emotions, build empathy, maintain positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and achieve goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Student Led Advisory Lessons- Monthly “SEAL CTL” Fridays for special interests and hobbies and students connect with each other and staff members- ABC Chats involve the whole school community investing in one-to-one time with the students
Empower student and educator agency by providing opportunities for voice, leadership, and celebrations of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- CTL Student Leadership Opportunities- MYP Personal Project Mentorship & Exhibition- Community Outreach - BSU, MTW, FFL- Student Leadership - Orientations, Events & Advisory- Teacher Leadership - EOF, TEAM, SCC & SBAT

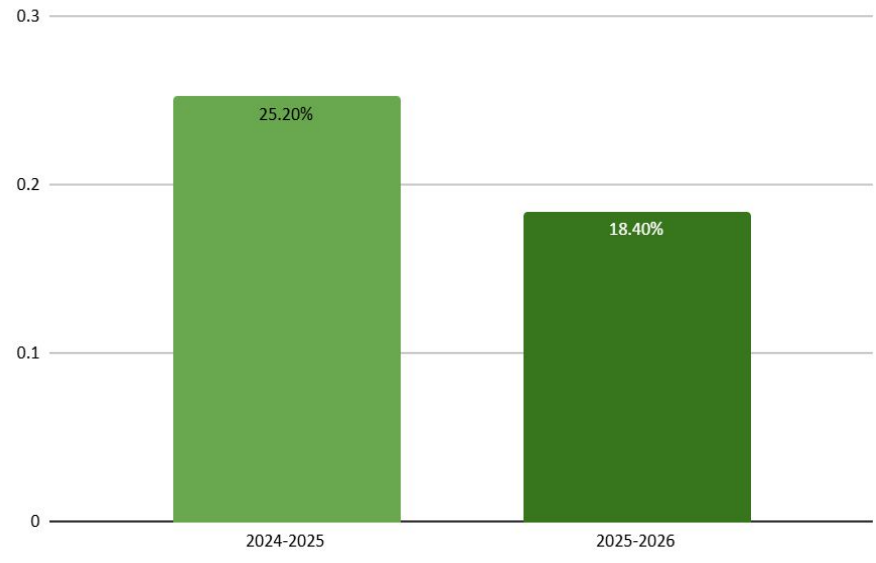
Accelerate Academic Achievement

Increase student and staff engagement by emphasizing the importance of daily attendance

Edsight Average Daily Attendance Comparison
Sept-Oct



Edsight Chronic Absenteeism Rates
Sept-Oct



Our Roadmap to Success



District
Improvement
Plan



School
Improvement
Plan

Key Performance Indicators and State Data Measure Progress



**Early Childhood Program
Expansion & Enhancement**

December 8, 2025

Research: Benefits of Early Childhood Programs

OEC's website <https://www.ctoec.org/research-with-oec/>

- 1) Early Experiences are **Critical**. With 90% of brain growth occurring by age 5, every interaction—playing, talking and exploring—builds neural connections that shape a child's future.
- 2) **ALL** Children who experience quality early learning and care programs are:
 - a) **25%** more likely to graduate high school
 - b) **4x** more likely to complete a bachelor's degree or higher
 - c) Earn up to **25%** more wages as an adult
- 3) Data Specific to Underrepresented Students:
 - a) Universal Pre-K can significantly shrink the school readiness gap between racial groups. For example, it can reduce the Black-white gap by nearly **20%** and the Latino-white gap by almost **36%**
 - b) Preschool can help mitigate risks associated with poverty, such as a higher likelihood of abuse or neglect, as children in public preschool programs are **half** as likely to be victims of abuse or neglect as non-attending peers.

GPS Strategic Plan Pillars

1



Accelerate Academic Achievement



2



Cultivate a Rich and Vibrant Learning Community



3



Strengthen Pathways that Develop Post Secondary Readiness



4

Attract and Grow A Skilled and Supported Workforce

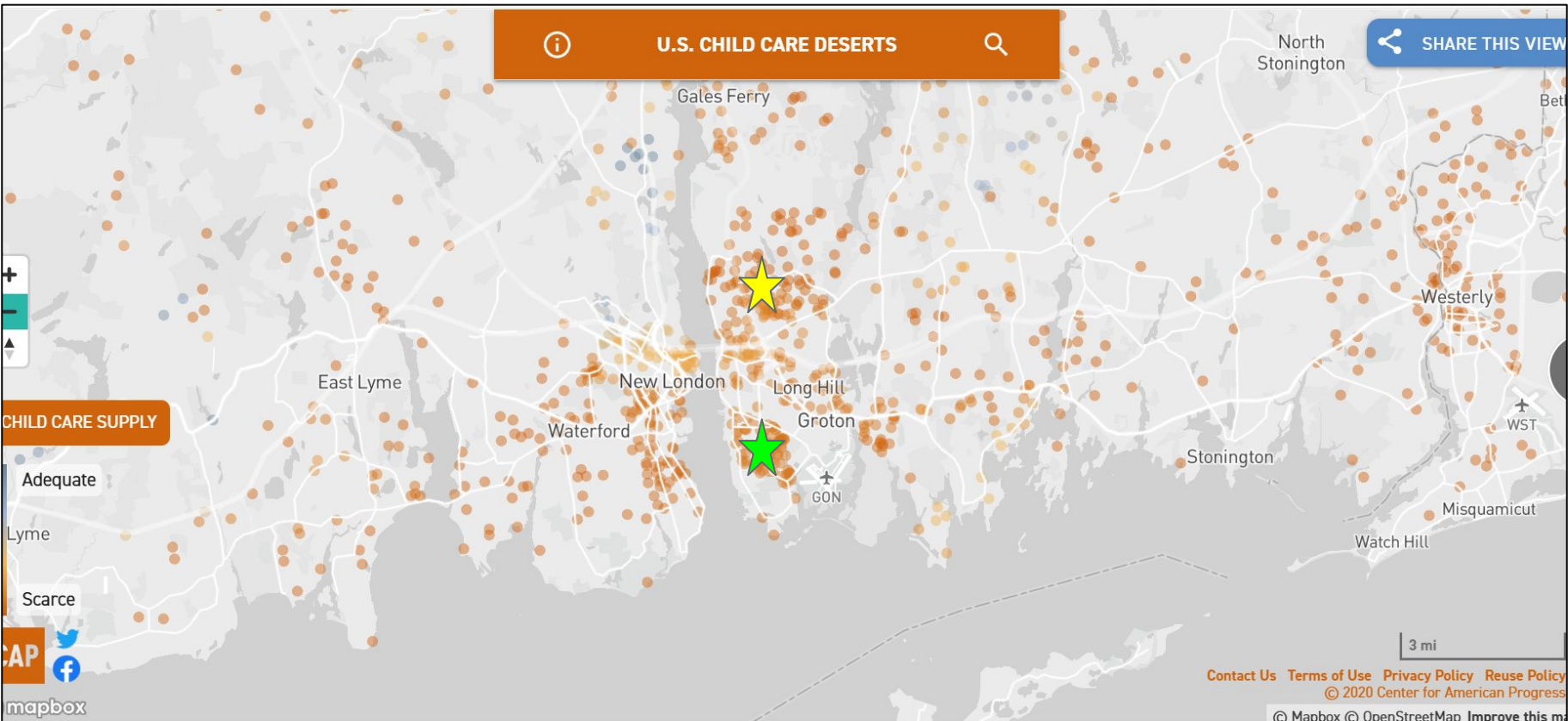


5

Improve Operational Efforts and Increase Fiscal Responsibility



Research: Early Childhood Deserts



Early Childhood Program Expansion

CURRENT - 11 CLASSROOMS

Mystic River Magnet School-

3 Classrooms= 6 sessions (A.M./P.M.)

1 Classroom (Full Day)

1 ABA Classroom

Northeast Academy-

1 Classroom (Full Day)

Thames River Magnet School-

2 Classrooms (Full Day)

3 Classrooms= 6 sessions (A.M./P.M.)

PROPOSED - 13 CLASSROOMS

Mary Morrison Early Childhood Center

7 Classrooms (Full Day)(Smart Start funded)

2 Additional Classrooms (Early Start funded)

1 ABA Classroom

Thames River Magnet School-

3 Classrooms = 6 sessions (A.M./P.M.)

Early Childhood Program Components

Mary Morrison's Early Childhood Center will include....

- All 4-yr old students
- Minimum of 15 students per class
- Transportation
- Opportunities for Play-Based “Specials”
- School Meals
- Classroom Paraeducator Support

Project Implementation Timeline

December 2025

- Fire Marshall visit and recommendations
- HVAC testing
- Water testing
- IT needs assessment and plan
- Walk through with preschool/preK teachers

January - April 2026

- Grounds assessment and plan
- Indoor/outdoor space preparation begins (includes cleanout, painting, furnishings, floor and window repairs)
- Marketing: parent information
- Enrollment begins (ongoing)
- Purchases for IT and begin installation
- Teacher planning begins on TLI days with focus on Play-Based Learning

Project Implementation Timeline

May - June 2026

- Order classroom supplies
- Playground and fence completion
- Hiring for non-certified and certified staff begins
- Transportation planning begins
- Apply to state for new facility code

July - Aug 2026

- All new technology installed, including wiring
- Final indoor/outdoor space preparations
- Final classroom setups

Project Budget: Grants and Future Funding

SMART START GRANT - Capital Improvements

January 2026 - May 2026

AWARDED

\$600,000

SMART START GRANT - Operating Expenditures

August 2026 - June 2027

AWARDED

\$600,000

EARLY START GRANT* - Operating Expenditures

January 2026 - June 2027

*\$13M for 650 spots statewide

DUE Dec 17th

RFI - Capital Improvements

DUE Dec 15th

More info at: <https://www.ctoec.org/early-childhood-education-endowment/>

Potential Future Cost Avoidance / Sustainability

Preschool - Grade 12 MAGNET SCHOOL TUITION & OTHER CHARGES

54 Preschool students currently enrolled at local magnet schools

Example: Local magnet preschool - GPS only pays for SPED charges -
\$2600 - \$30,000 per student costs to GPS

18 Kindergartners at local magnet school (**100%** previously in their preschool)

589 K-12 Students enrolled in regional Magnet Schools for 2025/26

\$505,726 budgeted tuition cost to GPS

\$650,000 budgeted for special education costs to GPS

Personnel

8-9 classrooms &
5 support rooms
(office, nurse, etc.)



Certified Staff	Estimated Annual Cost
Teachers (two additional)	
Program Coordinator (092 @ 0.6 FTE)	
Early Childhood Social Worker (0.4 FTE)	
Speech and Language Pathologist (0.6 FTE)	
Play Based Themed Coach	
Total, including fringe	\$370,292
Non-Certified Staff	
Paraprofessionals (two additional)	
Nurse	
Head Custodian	
School Secretary	
Total, including fringe	\$241,360.00
Total	\$611,652.00

Our Roadmap to Success



District
Improvement
Plan



School
Improvement
Plan

Key Performance Indicators and State Data Measure Progress