

District Strategic Plan 2026-2031

Year One: 2026-2027



***Include &
Collaborate***

***Embrace
Growth***

***Do Right by
ALL Kids***

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Community Message

Dear Malden Public Schools Community,

Our district is blessed with many strengths, including talented and diverse students, engaged parents and caregivers, committed educators and leaders, and a supportive city and community. Additionally, as a district we put our core values into action by continuously striving to do right by all of our students through inclusion, collaboration, and embracing growth.

This strategic plan harnesses our strengths and values to set out a vision of where Malden Public Schools can be in five years and the work we will undertake to make that vision a reality. This vision is informed by contributions and ideas shared by hundreds of people over the last two years.

Thank you for your investment in improving the lives of all the students in the Malden Public Schools. I truly look forward to continued dialogue with the School Committee and our broader community as we refine this vision and begin the next stage of our work together.

Go Malden!

Timothy Sippel, Ed.L.D.
Superintendent of Schools



Malden's Core Values

Three core values guide the work of the Malden Public Schools.

Include and Collaborate

We prioritize a sense of belonging for students, staff, and caregivers as well as making sure that people are included in decisions that impact them.

Embrace Growth

We believe in the ability of everyone to learn and grow. No one is a finished product and all of our students, educators, staff, leaders and community members are capable of achieving great things.

Do Right by ALL Kids

We are committed to providing every student with what they need to be prepared for whatever future they choose.



*Alone each of us is strong...
and together we are much stronger!*

Introduction

District leaders for the Malden Public Schools have devoted the last two years to collecting data, synthesizing areas for collective action, developing priorities, and developing the strategies described in this five-year strategic plan.

In the spirit of collaboration, the Superintendent and his Cabinet spent the 2024-2025 school year deeply engaged with our district community. They met with families, staff members, and students at special events, town halls, and listening sessions at every school. The district also administered four surveys to caregivers and staff, receiving over 1,500 responses.

Beyond community engagement, leaders visited every classroom in the district, reviewed state accountability results and interim assessment data, enrollment and attendance trends, and much more internal data to develop a comprehensive view of the present state of Malden Public Schools.

At the conclusion of that year of engagement and data collection, the Superintendent identified four areas of strength and six areas for collective action as outlined in his [Entry Findings report](#). These areas for collective action have now become the five strategic priorities that make up this strategic plan. Selected data that informed the selection of these areas is on the following page.

Malden's Strengths

- Diverse and Talented Students
- Engaged Parents & Caregivers
- Committed Educators and Leaders
- Supportive City and Community

Areas for Collective Action

- High Expectations for All
- Meeting Diverse Needs
- Fair Access to Opportunity
- Partnering with Families
- Nurturing a Strong Workforce
- Strength and Stability

Strategic Planning Process

In the fall of 2025, leaders began the process of converting entry findings into a strategic plan. They refined findings into high-level strategic priorities, and articulated potential metrics and strategies for each of the priorities. Each of these priorities are designed to be interconnected, with work towards one priority often reinforcing ongoing work in another priority. The results of this phase of work were submitted as a Strategic Plan Outline in January 2026.

With the outline developed, leaders began the work of phase two, in which internal teams collaboratively worked to refine the proposed metrics and strategies that make up the draft strategic plan. Phase two also included opportunities for community members to provide feedback on the draft plan.

In phase three, leaders revised the draft plan based on community feedback and conducted a final internal review ahead of presenting the final year one strategic plan to the School Committee.



**Phase 1: Design outline
informed by Entry
Findings**



**Phase 2: Plan
development and
community feedback**



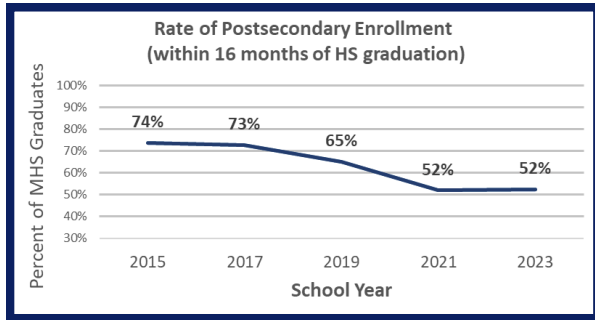
**Phase 3: Finalize plan
content and design**

Where We Are Now:

Selected Data from Entry Findings

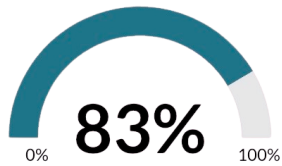
High Expectations for All

In surveys 93% caregivers who responded stated that establishing high expectations in academics was important or extremely important.



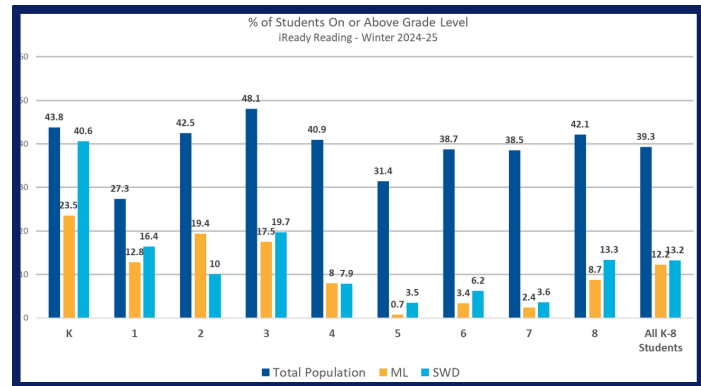
National Student Clearinghouse data provided by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) show that 74% of Malden graduates from 2015 matriculated to postsecondary education (two- or four-year college) within 16 months of graduating. This percentage has steadily declined: roughly half of the class of 2023 matriculated to postsecondary education within the same timeframe.

Meeting Diverse Needs



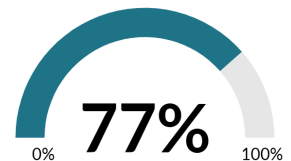
In listening sessions, caregivers strongly endorsed the following comment: "It is crucial that our teachers differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students, especially students with disabilities." In a survey, 83% of educators considered it important or extremely important for the school district to provide increased support and resources for multilingual learners (MLs), particularly those learning English.

In the winter of SY25, administrators compared the performance of MLs and students with disabilities (SWD) to that of the general population in Malden Public Schools on interim assessments for reading and math. The results of these assessments revealed disparities in the performance levels of multilingual learners and students with disabilities.



Fair Access to Opportunity

In a survey, 77% of educators considered it important or extremely important for the school district to consider "equity in program offerings across schools, with attention to class sizes, caseloads, and program/electives offerings."



★★★★☆ 4.1

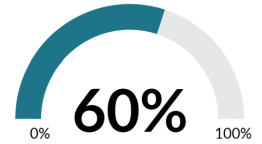
Additionally, during a feedback session, one caregiver shared that "I think this is important so that every student has the same opportunities regardless of what school they go to." This statement was highly rated by their fellow caregivers

Where We Are Now:

Selected Data from Entry Findings (Cont.)

Partnering with Families

In a survey, 61% of staff agreed it was important or extremely important to have “consistent methods to communicate with all parents and tap the assets of our broader community.”



In a caregiver feedback session, many caregivers agreed that “we need a single method of communication for families.”

Nurturing a Strong Workforce

In a caregiver feedback session, many caregivers strongly supported the idea that, for educators, “Language capacity and diversity are paramount. Connection is the foundation of everything we do.”

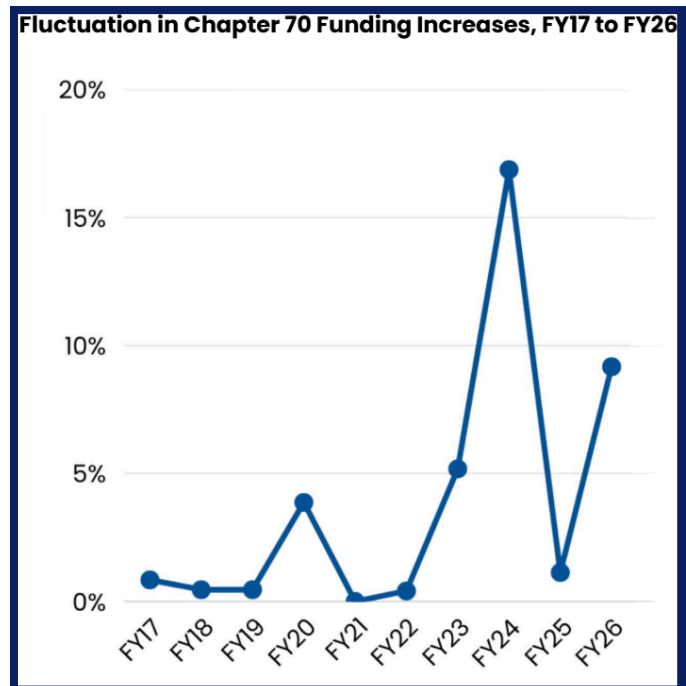
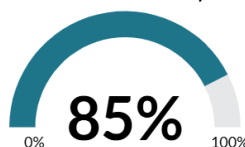


In a survey, 91% of educators considered it important or extremely important for the school district to prioritize “recruitment and hiring of staff for high needs roles to ensure these positions are fully staffed, and the need for increased staffing in various roles, including substitutes.”

Strength and Stability

State Chapter 70 funding accounts for more than half of the annual revenue for the Malden Public Schools’ budget; unfortunately, the annual increases in aid from the state have rarely kept pace with inflation and have been wildly unpredictable from one year to the next.

In a survey, 85% of caregivers considered it important or extremely important to consider “facilities and resources, including investments in infrastructure, including updated classrooms, labs, and outdoor spaces.”



Strategic Priorities

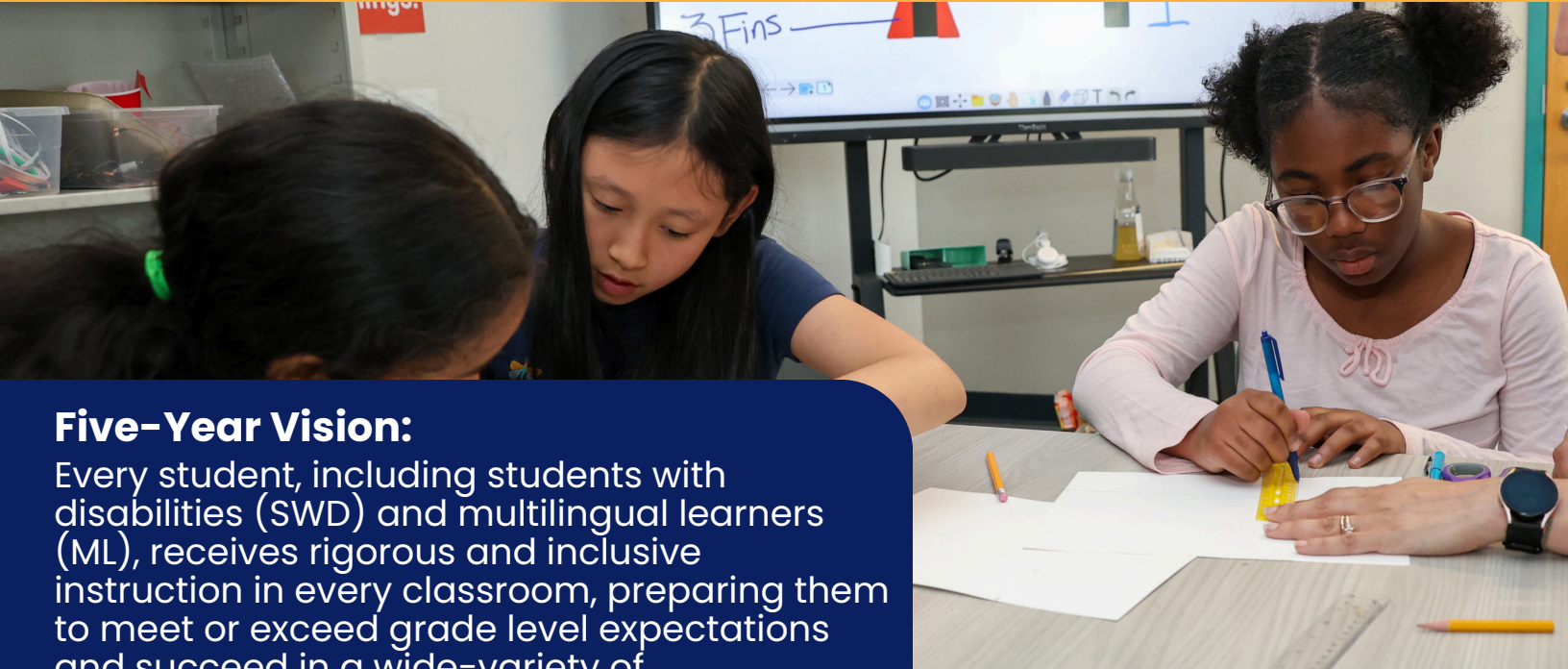
- 1 High expectations with support to meet diverse needs
- 2 Fair access to opportunity
- 3 Deep partnerships

Supporting priorities

- 4 Strong, well-supported workforce
- 5 Financial and operational sustainability



Priority 1: High expectations with support to meet diverse needs



Five-Year Vision:

Every student, including students with disabilities (SWD) and multilingual learners (ML), receives rigorous and inclusive instruction in every classroom, preparing them to meet or exceed grade level expectations and succeed in a wide-variety of postsecondary options.

Priority 1: Five-Year Measures of Success

- 1 Students in grades 3–8 and 10 will demonstrate increased achievement in English language arts, math, and science by making progress towards annual targets on state assessments.* Progress towards targets will be measured by the district and all schools receiving at least 2 out of 4 possible accountability points in the achievement category for each subject assessed.**
- 2 Students in benchmark grades of 5, 8, and 10 will further demonstrate high growth in English language arts and math on state assessments. The state defines high growth as an average Student Growth Percentile (SGP) of 60 or higher (comparing students' growth with that of peers statewide who performed similarly on the prior year's assessment).
- 3 Students with disabilities in grades 4, 8, and 10 will achieve high growth in ELA and math.*** The state defines high growth as an average Student Growth Percentile (SGP) of 60 or higher (comparing the growth of students with disabilities with that of peers statewide who performed similarly on the prior year's assessments).
- 4 Multilingual learners in all grades will increasingly meet individual annual targets to keep them on track to attaining English proficiency, based on results from the ACCESS assessment. Progress towards district and school targets will be measured by the receiving at least 2 out of 4 possible accountability points in the achievement category for "English Language Proficiency".
- 5 Students in grade 1 will show average or above average growth in their DIBELS literacy assessments by end of year compared to beginning of year national norms.

Science is assessed in grades 5, 8, and 10. **In DESE's accountability system, a 2 represents improvements towards targets, a 3 represents meeting the target, and a 4 represents exceeding the target. DESE annually revises these targets for each content area for each school and for the district based on students' performance on the prior year's assessments. *Grades 4, 8 and 10 are the grade levels monitored by DESE to assess the achievement of the district's students with disabilities.*

Priority 1: Strategies

Strategy 1.a

Provide all students with access to core instruction using high quality curriculum and resources.

Year 1 Activities

- Review implementation of existing curricula and evaluate renewal options
- Evaluate existing content pacing guides' alignment to state standards
- Implement newly adopted high-quality instructional materials for English Language Arts classes in grades 9 and 10
- Continue to design student schedules so that students with disabilities and multilingual learners receive needed services without missing core instruction

Strategy 1.b

Ensure instruction is effective for all students in all classrooms.

Year 1 Activities

- Use Professional Development (PD) days and job-embedded professional learning time to provide educators with training on evidence-based instructional strategies
- Support the instructional leadership of administrators and educators to continue improving the effectiveness of instruction
- Expand focus of instructional coaching to support the effective inclusion of students with disabilities and multilingual learners

Strategy 1.c

Confirm all students have access to intervention and supports that meet their diverse needs.

Year 1 Activities

- Continue to design grade K-8 student schedules so that all students have access to needed interventions during the school day
- Evaluate intervention strategies across schools to ensure all students benefit from the most effective approaches
- Review and improve multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) processes across all schools

Strategy 1.d

Ensure all students with disabilities receive high-quality instruction.

Year 1 Activities

- Develop a coherent professional learning plan to strengthen instructional practices for inclusion and substantially separate settings
- Assess existing practices related to team placement decisions and identify opportunities for professional learning and increased transparency regarding these processes

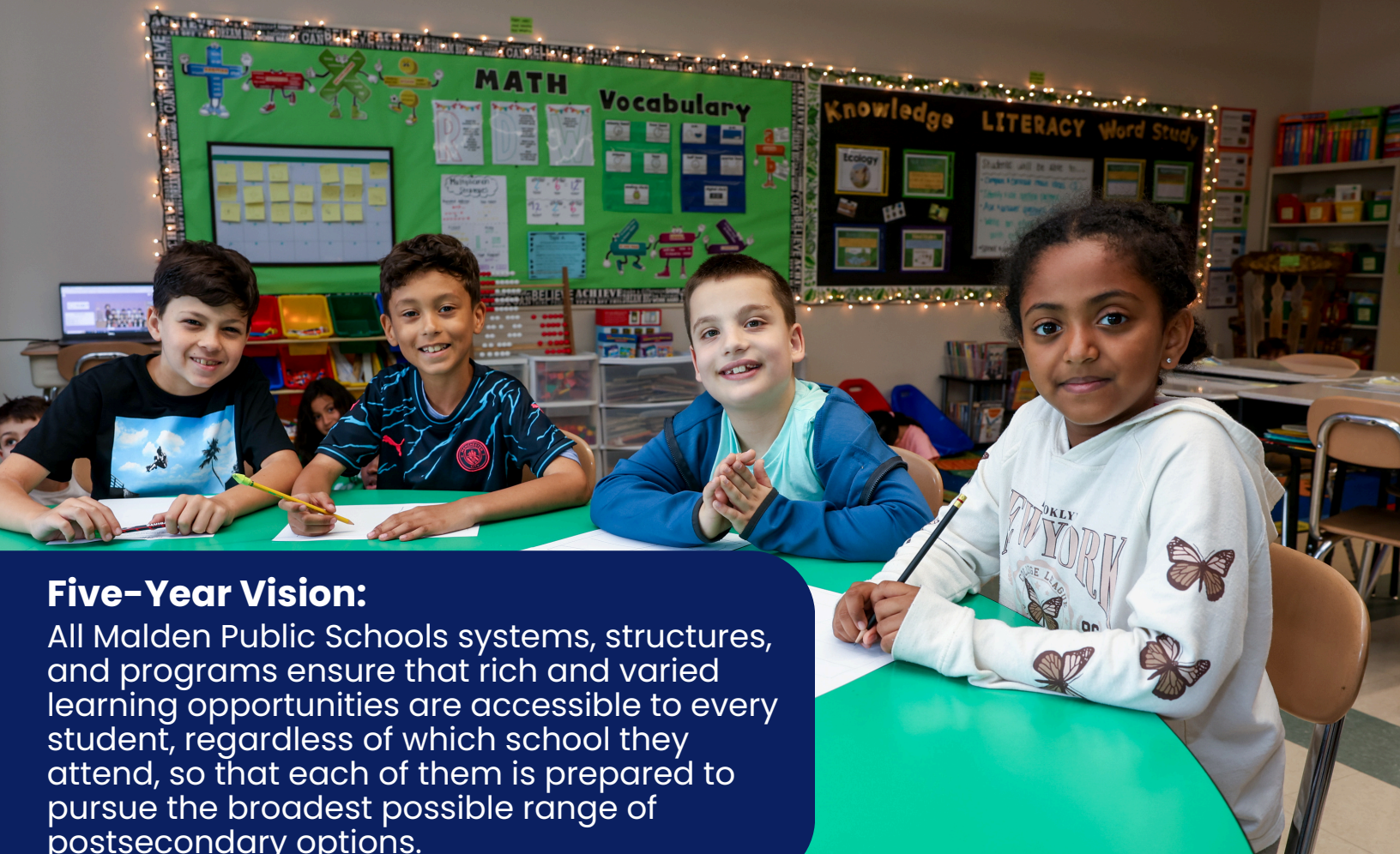
Strategy 1.e

Establish high-quality interim assessments and assessment strategies that allow us to regularly monitor and improve student achievement.

Year 1 Activities

- Conduct needs assessment and gather feedback from stakeholders around current interim assessments
- Explore alternative options being used by similar districts

Priority 2: Fair access to opportunity



Five-Year Vision:

All Malden Public Schools systems, structures, and programs ensure that rich and varied learning opportunities are accessible to every student, regardless of which school they attend, so that each of them is prepared to pursue the broadest possible range of postsecondary options.

Priority 2: Five-Year Measures of Success

- 1 An increased percentage of high school graduates will meet MassCore requirements with a minimum 3.0 GPA, required for admission to state universities and UMass campuses.
- 2 A substantially higher percentage of graduates across all student groups will matriculate to a two- or four-year college or university within 16 months of graduation.
- 3 Prior to high school, K-8 students will have comparable opportunities across schools to discover and develop abilities in performing arts, competitive sports, and world languages.
- 4 Reduce the disproportionality of student groups (Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, students with disabilities, and multilingual learners) participating in the middle school honors pathway and enrolled in advanced coursework classes at Malden High School.
- 5 Establishment of plan for effective use of educational technology informed by stakeholder consensus.

Priority 2: Strategies

Strategy 2.a

Continue to ensure that student advising processes for student course selection and post-secondary planning are equitable, consistent, and effective.

Year 1 Activities

- Assess existing counseling services and postsecondary supports at MHS, including counselor caseloads, time allocation, and student-reported experience
- Review engagement with families regarding course recommendation and selection processes across subject areas in middle school and high school
- Continue RISE work related to high school student success

Strategy 2.b

Create broader, equitable K-8 exploratory access to arts and languages.

Year 1 Activities

- Complete a review of current performing arts and world language offerings at each K-8 school, including staffing, frequency, duration, and student participation
- Conduct research into successful programs for performing arts and world languages at peer districts with similar demographics
- Engage with K-8 principals, exploratory teachers, and caregivers about exploratory access

Strategy 2.c

Ensure that K-8 programming offers opportunities across content areas for students ready to be challenged.

Year 1 Activities

- Evaluate the Middle School Honors Pathway and the Beast Academy Pilot to determine whether to expand and/or adjust these options
- Research participation criteria and programming models from peer districts, with attention to equitable access

Strategy 2.d

Strengthen implementation of educational technology to ensure effective use across classrooms and grade levels.

Year 1 Activities

- Review approval process for use of instructional technology tools
- Develop coherent guidance for the use of technology, including screen time, across grade levels
- Revise district policies and regulations to adequately address new technologies and respond to the recommendations of the 2025-2026 Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Learning Working Group

Strategy 2.e

Ensure grading and assessment practices support fair access to opportunity.

Year 1 Activities

- Evaluate current grading practices at MHS and middle school grades with particular attention to how grading affects eligibility for advanced coursework and postsecondary options
- Review current grading practices and report card formats in grades K-4
- Research evidence-based grading practices and peer district approaches
- Begin conversations with MHS teacher leadership about grading practices within and across subject areas

Priority 3: Deep Partnerships



Five-Year Vision:

Families, caregivers, and the community receive consistent, transparent communication, participate in authentic engagement opportunities, develop meaningful partnerships with schools, and ultimately feel increased levels of trust towards Malden Public Schools.

Priority 3: Five-Year Measures of Success

- 1 Increase the percentage of caregivers (both as a whole and across schools and student groups) who are satisfied with their student's school and the district as measured through caregiver surveys.
- 2 Increase the percentage of students who self-report a sense of belonging at school.
- 3 All schools and the district will demonstrate progress towards DESE accountability targets for student attendance by receiving at least 2 out of 4 possible points in the chronic absenteeism category.
- 4 Increase the percentage of students transitioning from grade 8 to grade 9 who continue with the Malden Public Schools.
- 5 Increase community understanding of preschool access options including all Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI) partner providers.

Priority 3: Strategies

Strategy 3.a

Ensure caregivers receive the information they need in ways that are predictable, effective, and understandable.

Year 1 Activities

- Establish baseline data on ParentSquare registration, engagement, and language preferences across schools
- Review district and school website usability, building on the December 2024 baseline, to measure improvement since the new website launch
- Review translation and interpretation practices across the district and identify gaps in language access

Strategy 3.b

Build durable structures for authentic family engagement and two-way input in decision-making.

Year 1 Activities

- Develop standard post-engagement feedback surveys to capture how participants experienced events including IEP team meetings, educator/caregiver conferences, and other district events
- Continue engagement with School Councils, District PTO, SEPAC, ELPAC, and other existing advisory bodies, and assess what additional structures might elevate voices not currently being heard
- Partner with SEPAC and community members to strengthen parent leadership and support the achievement of students with disabilities

Strategy 3.c

Engage families across schools to ensure students' successful transition to Malden High School.

Year 1 Activities

- Identify opportunities to welcome elementary and middle school students and families to more events at Malden High
- Expand opportunities for Malden High students to engage with younger peers through mentorship and service learning
- Review engagement with middle school families through the high school transition and develop adjustments for implementation in spring 2027

Strategy 3.d

Ensure school attendance teams use a targeted attendance strategy that includes educators and families.

Year 1 Activities

- Review attendance improvement strategies from SY26 and update existing playbook to reflect these most effective strategies
- Increase involvement of educators in strategies to improve student attendance
- Communicate importance of attendance to all community members

Strategy 3.e

Increase access to quality preschool education for all children in Malden while ensuring that district programs are both strong and financially sustainable.

Year 1 Activities

- Expand impact of Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI) and identify opportunities to expand or deepen partnerships with community-based early learning providers
- Continue ongoing review of the Early Learning Center program model to ensure sustainability

Priority 4: Strong, well-supported workforce



Five-Year Vision:

Malden Public Schools recruits, develops, and retains a diverse and talented team of educators and staff committed to a professional culture of growth, collaboration, and respect.

Priority 4: Five-Year Measures of Success

- 1 Improve teacher retention rates, including those for educators of color.
- 2 Increase the percentage of teachers reporting that they receive valuable feedback on their practice.
- 3 Increase the percentage of teachers reporting that district and school professional development is helpful in improving their instructional practice.

Priority 4: Strategies

Strategy 4.a

Maintain competitive compensation and benefits.

Year 1 Activities

- Review recently negotiated contracts for peer districts to ensure compensation remains competitive and compelling
- Benchmark Malden's benefits package against peer districts to identify any gaps in non-salary compensation

Strategy 4.b

Continue early, proactive recruitment and hiring each year, with a focus on hard-to-fill positions.

Year 1 Activities

- Sustain the early recruitment timeline established in SY25, with initial postings being advertised no later than early March
- Refine special education recruitment process including clarifying program and role descriptions
- Develop intentional outreach to teacher preparation programs and pipelines that serve candidates whose backgrounds reflect Malden's student population

Strategy 4.c

Provide high-quality, aligned professional learning tied to instructional priorities.

Year 1 Activities

- Continue developing professional development calendars at the district and school level aligned to district instructional priorities and school improvement plans
- Sustain the use of "PD Block" embedded professional learning during the school day
- Continue the lesson study protocol with a focus on supporting diverse learners
- Gather feedback from staff on the relevance and quality of professional learning offerings, and use findings to refine SY28 planning

Strategy 4.d

Strengthen routines related to non-evaluative and evaluative observations.

Year 1 Activities

- Continue to calibrate district and school leaders' use of "Instructional Look-Fors" tool
- Finalize evaluation rubric to support the growth of Education Support Professionals

Strategy 4.e

Strengthen induction and mentoring for new educators.

Year 1 Activities

- Review current induction and mentoring practices across the district, including how mentors are selected, trained, compensated, and matched with new teachers
- Identify gaps in current mentoring supports, particularly for teachers in hard-to-staff positions and for teachers from backgrounds historically underrepresented in the profession
- If awarded and approved, implement DESE Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program (RTAP) planning grant to develop strong pipelines of educators for critical high-need roles

Priority 5: Financial and Operational Sustainability



Five-Year Vision:

Malden Public Schools manages its resources strategically and transparently, invests in the infrastructure that supports high-quality teaching and learning, and builds the partnerships and revenue streams needed to sustain and strengthen the district over time.

Priority 5: Five-Year Measures of Success

- 1 Annual budgets have clear alignment with district priorities and meet state net school spending requirements.
- 2 Decrease instances of unexpected facility issues requiring costly repairs.
- 3 Increase effective use of available facility space.
- 4 Development of additional revenue sources that strategically support district priorities.

Priority 5: Strategies

Strategy 5.a

Align fiscally responsible budget decisions to strategic plan priorities.

Year 1 Activities

- Review enrollment-driven staffing guidelines established in FY26, and refine based on lessons learned
- Develop a budget communication approach that connects each major investment to a strategic plan priority, so that the budget becomes a visible expression of the strategic plan
- Publish an annual budget summary accessible to caregivers and community members in multiple languages

Strategy 5.b

Strengthen infrastructure related to educational technology including investment in hardware and software.

Year 1 Activities

- Complete an assessment of staff and student devices and classroom technology needs
- Assess current software investments and identify areas for fiscal or operational improvements

Strategy 5.c

Align investments in facilities and infrastructure with strategic priorities.

Year 1 Activities

- Assess facility availability and compare to enrollment trends
- Review strategic priorities to identify potential future facility and infrastructure investment needs
- Conduct annual assessment of facilities and identify areas requiring repair

Strategy 5.d

Strengthen operational systems and efficiency.

Year 1 Activities

- Conduct an initial assessment of district operational systems (human resources, finance, technology, scheduling, communications) to identify opportunities to improve services for schools, staff, and families
- Prioritize one to two systems for focused improvement in SY28 based on the assessment

Strategy 5.e

Expand and diversify revenue opportunities through partnerships with the city, state, and philanthropic entities.

Year 1 Activities

- Assess current allocations and identify opportunities for strategic shifting of funds in alignment with grant requirements
- Identify opportunities for additional grant funds aligned with strategic priorities
- Continue collaboration with the City of Malden on shared priorities, including identifying opportunities for cost-sharing and joint investment
- Engage with state legislative delegation to advocate for more predictable and adequate Chapter 70 funding
- Cultivate relationships with regional philanthropic organizations and identify one to two initial philanthropic partnership opportunities

Progress Monitoring

The measures of success outlined in this document are intended to be met by spring of 2031, the last year of this plan. Below are ways the district plans to monitor annual progress towards these outcomes.

Target Setting

The measures of success established for each priority largely fall into two categories: (1) measures with targets set by an outside organization (e.g., DESE) will be released by those organizations on a yearly basis, or (2) measures for which targets will be set by the district.

For the first category, the district plans to update the Malden community on the establishment of these targets on a yearly basis as they become available.

For second category, the district plans to set targets for SY27 and beyond in the fall of 2026. This delay allows for the SY26 end of year data to be available to set a baseline for improvement.

Annual Progress Update Reports

At the end of each school year, the district will report to the School Committee and the public the progress relative to that year's activities as well as the five-year overall measures of success. State accountability outcomes for the district will be presented each fall with a comprehensive review of the prior year's efforts when these data are released by DESE. District leadership will also engage with stakeholders throughout the year as it develops and confirms the activities to support each strategy in the following year.

Additionally, the district plans to communicate clear, visible progress checkpoints in a "you said, we did" format to demonstrate alignment between community feedback and district action.

Five-Year Evaluation of Success

In the spring of 2031, the district will report on the progress towards meeting or exceeding targets established in each of the measures of success for priorities 1-5.

Based on the cumulative progress towards targets across measures and priorities, the district will provide a comprehensive evaluation of progress. This report and evaluation will be used in the drafting of the subsequent strategic plan.



Acknowledgements

Malden School Committee

Mayor Gary Christenson, *Chair*

Michael Drummey, *Ward 1*

Robert McCarthy, Jr., *Ward 2*

Jennifer Spadafora, *Ward 3*

Dawn Macklin, *Ward 4*

Elizabeth Hortie, *Ward 5*

Peter Piazza, *Ward 6*

Keith Bernard, *Ward 7*

Sharyn Rose-Zeiberg, *Ward 8*

Malden Public Schools Cabinet

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Ariana Langston, *Executive Assistant & Clerk to the School Committee*

Komal Bhasin, *Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning*

Pamela MacDonald, *Assistant Superintendent of Student Services*

Dr. Sarah McLaughlin, *Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources*

Toni Mertz, *Director of Finance and Operations*

Tess Meagher, *Communications Coordinator*

A big thank you to all of the caregivers, educators, and community members who attended listening sessions, responded to surveys, and provided feedback throughout strategic planning process!





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