

DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

School Committee

10.21.2026



I have several items to share this evening.

Tackle the Stigma 5K & Wellness Fair

I would like to recognize Loretta Andre and the Shepherd Hill Cheerleading program and the many students, staff, and community members who helped organize and support this year's Tackle the Stigma 5K & Wellness Fair.

Despite having to reschedule the event and having fewer participating vendors than originally anticipated, the event was a tremendous success. More importantly, it demonstrated the power of student voice and leadership in bringing our community together around an issue that continues to impact so many individuals and families.

Anytime our students take the lead in creating opportunities to raise awareness about mental health challenges and suicide prevention, we have accomplished something meaningful. I am proud of their efforts and grateful to everyone who supported this important event.

Dudley-Charlton Leadership Council (DCLC) – 2026–2027

I am pleased to share that the Dudley-Charlton Leadership Council (DCLC) has been established for the 2026–2027 school year. The Council provides students with opportunities to develop leadership skills, share their perspectives, and contribute to initiatives that positively impact the student experience throughout the Dudley-Charlton RSD.

This year, we welcome 13 new members:

Korina Paliyannis, Miya Chauvin, Violet Romanelli, Julia Williams, Olivia Williams, Mayah Pillion, Kameron Laferriere, Olivia Kac, Ariana Jurski, Eloira Ibrahim, Stephanie Krysinski, Kyn Phommachanh, and Alyssa Grammer.

We also welcome back 10 returning members:

Carter Gendron – President, Elyse Peculis – Vice President, Jean Bardier - Secretary, Jillian Clarke - Treasurer, Elyse Resener, Emma Kokocinski, Erin Gormley, Joya Adib, Kennedy Davis, and Sinead Ennis.

This year's DCLC includes 23 students, representing both returning members and students new to the leadership experience. I look forward to working with these students throughout the school year as we continue to create meaningful opportunities for student voice, leadership development, and involvement in decisions and initiatives that shape their educational experiences.

Shepherd Hill Regional High School – First Honors Dinner

On September 23, Shepherd Hill Regional High School hosted its annual First Honors Dinner, recognizing students for their outstanding academic achievement. It was a wonderful evening celebrating our students alongside their families and the educators who support their success.

I would like to recognize Principal Darren Elwell and the many faculty and staff members who contributed to making the evening such a success. From transforming the cafeteria into a welcoming setting to preparing and serving an exceptional dinner, the collective effort demonstrated the pride and commitment the staff bring to Shepherd Hill.

Events like this remind us of the importance of celebrating academic excellence and the meaningful relationships between our students, families, and educators. My appreciation to everyone who helped make this a memorable evening.

As we move further into the school year, I continue to be encouraged by the opportunities our students have to demonstrate leadership, academic excellence, and community involvement. I appreciate the continued efforts of our staff, families, and community partners who make these experiences possible.

A Responsible Financial Path Forward

In light of the unsuccessful September 29 capital vote, I believe it is important that we take stock of the financial responsibilities and challenges facing the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District (Dudley-Charlton RSD). As we look ahead to the development of the FY2028 operating budget, ongoing capital needs across our seven schools, and the potential opportunity to participate in the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) grant program, we have several significant considerations before us.

While the administration has a responsibility to identify needs, evaluate alternatives, and provide financial recommendations, it is ultimately the responsibility of the Regional School Committee to establish the Dudley-Charlton RSD's priorities and determine the direction of our financial planning. As the governing body of a regional school district serving two communities, the Committee must consider these responsibilities collectively, recognizing the financial implications of its decisions for Dudley and Charlton.

The unsuccessful capital vote presents an opportunity for the School Committee to reassess the Dudley-Charlton RSD's approach to future investments and establish a financial direction that reflects both our educational responsibilities and the financial capacity of the communities we serve.

While the results of the capital vote differed between Dudley and Charlton, the combined vote did not provide the approval necessary to move forward with the proposed investment. The vote also occurred alongside a separate operational override question in one of our communities, which was unsuccessful. While we cannot determine the motivations of individual voters from these results, the circumstances reinforce the importance of understanding the broader financial considerations facing our communities and our schools.

I believe it would be a mistake to interpret the outcome as one town being more supportive of public education than the other. Both Dudley and Charlton have demonstrated a commitment to their schools, and both must balance educational needs with other municipal responsibilities and the financial circumstances of their residents.

Our responsibility is to recognize those considerations while continuing to meet our obligations to students, staff, and the facilities entrusted to our care.

Understanding Our Capital Needs

Over the past several years, the Dudley-Charlton RSD has taken deliberate steps to better understand the condition of its facilities and establish a long-term approach to maintaining our seven school buildings.

The independent Facilities Condition Assessment completed by Habeeb & Associates in May 2024 identified approximately \$139 million in recommended improvements across the Dudley-Charlton RSD. These findings reflect aging infrastructure, building systems approaching or exceeding their useful service life, and the ongoing responsibility to maintain safe and functional learning environments.

The assessment also recognized that our school buildings have been well maintained by Dudley-Charlton RSD personnel. Many of the needs identified reflect the natural deterioration of facilities and systems over time.

The Dudley-Charlton RSD's proposed capital investment represented an effort to begin addressing a portion of these documented needs. However, the outcome of the vote provides an opportunity for the School Committee to revisit the timing, scope, prioritization, and funding capacity for future improvements.

Not every capital project has a direct or immediately visible connection to classroom instruction. Improvements involving pavement, communication systems, roofing, mechanical equipment, and other infrastructure are nevertheless part of maintaining safe and operational school facilities.

As we move forward, the administration must provide clear explanations of why projects are necessary and the financial consequences of delaying them. The School Committee must then consider these factors when establishing capital priorities for the Dudley-Charlton RSD.

The FY2028 Operating Budget

Our most immediate financial responsibility is the development of a sustainable FY2028 operating budget.

The Dudley-Charlton RSD continues to face increasing costs associated with personnel, employee benefits, special education, transportation, utilities, instructional resources, and other essential services.

These pressures must be considered alongside our responsibility to provide educational programs and services that meet the needs of our students.

At the same time, we recognize that the financial resources available to the Dudley-Charlton RSD and its member towns are limited.

The development of the FY2028 budget must therefore involve a careful examination of expenditures, staffing, operational efficiencies, available revenues, and the long-term sustainability of our commitments.

The administration must be prepared to present options, identify efficiencies, and make recommendations. The School Committee, in turn, must establish budget priorities and make the difficult decisions necessary to balance educational responsibilities with available financial resources.

Our shared objective should be to develop an operating budget that maintains essential educational services while recognizing the financial circumstances of both communities.

The Potential MSBA Opportunity

The Dudley-Charlton RSD continues to pursue a potential opportunity through the Massachusetts School Building Authority to address the long-term needs of Heritage School and evaluate possible school building configurations in Charlton.

The 2024 Facilities Condition Assessment identified significant building envelope, roofing, and mechanical deficiencies at Heritage School, raising important questions about the long-term cost of maintaining the existing facility.

Participation in the MSBA process may provide an opportunity to evaluate potential building solutions with state financial assistance, including consideration of consolidating Charlton's current three-school configuration into two facilities.

However, state assistance would not eliminate the Dudley-Charlton RSD's local financial responsibility associated with a major building project.

The MSBA process must therefore be considered within the broader context of the Dudley-Charlton RSD's financial outlook, including annual operating budgets, existing obligations, and other capital needs.

We must also carefully consider the appropriateness of making significant capital investments in facilities that may be affected by future building decisions.

While the MSBA process will have its own requirements and timelines, the School Committee will need to evaluate the financial implications of each stage and determine how potential commitments align with the Dudley-Charlton RSD's broader priorities.

Establishing a Coordinated Financial Approach

As we consider these three significant financial responsibilities, I believe the School Committee has an important opportunity to establish a coordinated approach that recognizes the relationship between our operating budget, capital needs, and potential long-term building investments.

These responsibilities cannot be considered independently.

Annual operating expenditures affect the resources available for capital improvements. Likewise, new capital obligations can affect the financial capacity of our communities to sustain educational programs and services. A potential MSBA building project adds another important consideration to this planning process.

As the governing body of the Dudley-Charlton RSD, the School Committee must consider the needs of the District as a whole while recognizing the differing financial circumstances and responsibilities of its member towns.

While the location of a school may influence how a particular project is evaluated or funded, the School Committee's responsibility is to consider the educational, operational, and financial needs of the Dudley-Charlton RSD as a whole.

There may be alternative approaches to addressing capital needs, including changes to the timing, scope, or funding of individual projects. However, those alternatives should be evaluated through a common Dudley-Charlton RSD financial planning process, with careful consideration of the Regional Agreement, applicable requirements, and the financial implications for both communities.

The administration can provide the necessary financial information, facilities assessments, and recommendations to support this work. However, the establishment of priorities and the direction of the Dudley-Charlton RSD's financial strategy must be guided by the School Committee.

Difficult decisions lie ahead, and it is the School Committee's responsibility to establish clear priorities and make those decisions in the best interests of the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District as a whole, while recognizing the financial responsibilities of both communities.

Moving Forward

We must recognize that financial decisions made today may affect the resources available to address other responsibilities in the years ahead.

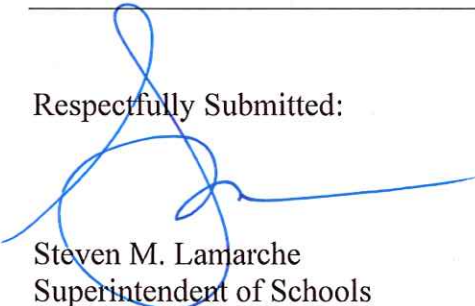
As we begin the FY2028 budget process, the School Committee's role in establishing the District's financial direction is essential. While individual projects may serve particular schools or communities, financial planning must reflect the Committee's responsibility to the Dudley-Charlton Regional School District as a whole and to the students and families we collectively serve.

As Superintendent, I remain committed to providing the School Committee with the information, analysis, and recommendations necessary to support informed decisions. I also remain committed to working collaboratively with municipal leadership and both communities as the Committee establishes its financial priorities.

Ultimately, the financial decisions before us must remain connected to the goals and priorities established in our Dudley-Charlton RSD Improvement Plan for 2025–2030. Whether developing the FY2028 operating budget, prioritizing capital improvements across our seven schools, or evaluating the potential MSBA opportunity at Heritage School, these efforts are interconnected and must support our broader commitment to strengthening the continuum of learning, improving Dudley-Charlton RSD systems and practices, and maintaining meaningful engagement with our families and communities.

As we move forward, I believe the School Committee has an important opportunity to bring these priorities together, consider the financial capacity of both communities, and establish a responsible path that supports our District's mission to *"advance the knowledge and well-being of our children and our community."*

Respectfully Submitted:



Steven M. Lamarche
Superintendent of Schools

Here a few important dates for school year [2026-2027](#)

October

Friday, October 30, 2026 – End of Quarter 1 – SHRHS and Middle Schools

November

Thursday, November 5, 2026 – Early Release – All Students/Parent Conferences

Wednesday, November 11, 2026 – Veterans Day – No School

Friday, November 20, 2026 – End of Elementary Trimester 1

Wednesday, November 25, 2026 – Early Release – All Students

Thursday and Friday, November 26–27, 2026 – Thanksgiving Recess – No School

