



Haverhill Public Schools

Office of the Superintendent

Entry Report | 2018-2019

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Dear Community Member,

In March 2018, the Haverhill School Committee selected me as the next superintendent of Haverhill Public Schools. I immediately drafted an Entry Plan, including pre-entry activities, focusing on an intentional and inclusive process for my transition into the Haverhill Public Schools (HPS).

In the days since my start in Haverhill on July 1, 2018, I have conducted over 75 visits to our 17 schools. During these visits, I have talked with students, met teachers, viewed instruction, analyzed student data, assessed facilities, and considered resources. I have worked with principals to set rigorous goals for themselves, their teachers and their students.

Apart from these visits, I have engaged in over 260 meetings with staff members. These meetings have taken place individually, both in small groups and in large forums. I have met with teachers and Educational Support Personnel (ESPs) representing every school, as well as staff from transportation, facilities, technology, special education, English language development, assistant principals, central office staff members, members of the clerical union and non-unit staff. Along with the team at central office, I have instituted monthly meetings with principals for both leadership and operations, as well as weekly management meetings with senior leadership, and ongoing workgroup meetings with appropriate school and district-based staff focused on data collection, the budget process, class-size management, and re-envisioning parent registration. I have held an instructional retreat, an operational retreat, and an all staff convocation.

In addition to listening intently to the school staff, I have engaged in observations and conversations with the community. I have attended over 150 meetings or events with community members. These range from one to one meetings with families, business owners, and community leaders, to joining teams and committees such as Hack Haverhill, Mount Washington Alliance, and Haverhill Promise. I have spoken and listened at several community receptions including the mayor's reception and the gracious receptions held by Northern Essex Community College, the Kiwanis Club and the Exchange Club. I have visited an array of dedicated youth-serving organizations including the YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs, Community Action of Haverhill and others, with many still left to visit. I have attended sporting events and holiday gatherings, joining the community in times of both joy and sorrow. I have spoken with dozens of parents about their children, their schools, and their hopes for the future.

In addition to my observations and the feedback from hundreds of staff, family, and community members, I have reviewed a wide variety of data and reports relative to HPS, our staff, our students and our educational outcomes. This information supported my deeper understanding of the issues raised by our stakeholders.

With the first 100 school days of my term as Superintendent behind me, I have compiled these entry findings for the review and benefit of our schools and our community. I have adopted the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE's) District Standards and Indicators as an organizational framework for this report. The framework defines six standards of effective school district policy and practice, which, if implemented well, are likely to lead to improved student performance, opportunities, and outcomes. The framework focuses on the embracement of equity as imperative to effectively serving all students. Educational equity refers to the principle of fairness. While it is often used interchangeably with the related principle of equality, equity encompasses a wide variety of educational models, programs, and strategies that may be considered fair, but not necessarily equal.



Contextual Background

The district has 17 schools. As of October 2018, the district enrolled 8,059 students (including the enrollment of the Silver Hill School, which has returned to HPS after being a Horace Mann Charter). The schools are:

- Bradford Elementary School: (K-4) Enrollment 316
- Hunking: (K-8) Enrollment 1,027
- Bartlett: (K-2) Enrollment 107
- Consentino: (3-8) Enrollment 976
- Crowell: (K) Enrollment 97
- Nettle: (5-8) Enrollment 500
- Golden Hill: (1-4) Enrollment 497
- Greenleaf Kindergarten Center: (K) Enrollment 108
- Haverhill Alternative School (HALT): (6-12) Enrollment 46
- Haverhill High School: (9-12) Enrollment 1,831
- Silver Hill: (K-5) Enrollment 560
- Whittier: (5-8) Enrollment 542
- Moody: (PreK) Enrollment 221
- Pentucket Lake: (K-4) Enrollment 504
- TEACH: Enrollment 50
- Tilton: (K-4) Enrollment 537
- Walnut Square: (K-2) Enrollment 140

The chart below shows a steady rise in the district’s student population over the past five years. Since the 2013–2014 school year our student enrollment has increased by 316 students (4 percent). During that same period of time, the percentage of students in the district designated by DESE as special needs, ELLS, or living in poverty has increased from 50% to 60% of all students.

School Year	HPS Student Population	High Needs %
SY 17-18	8,059	60
SY 16-17	8,019	58
SY 15-16	7,904	55
SY 14-15	7,833	52
SY 13-14	7,743	50

**inclusive of the Silver Hill Horace Mann Charter School*

During the 2017-18 school year and into the fall of 2018, a group of HPS educators representing a diverse cross section of our district community joined together under the Essex County Learning Community (ECLC) grant and tutelage to begin to develop an Action Plan for the school system. The group reported that:

“changing demographics coupled with the changing nature of how students learn and interact with the world has impacted our need to address core instruction. Students interact with the world through media and technology more than ever and therefore the “sage on the stage” style of instruction and passive learning is no longer effective in engaging students. These classroom strategies, when routinely implemented, engage all students. However, when looking at various data sources, it is clear that not all students across the district are engaged. Forty two percent of our students are out 10 or more days and almost 22% are considered chronically absent. High



needs students are twice as likely to drop out than their non-high needs peers. Even more alarming, is students with disabilities are almost four times more likely to drop out than non-disabled peers. HPS employs over 500 teachers and many of them just lack the tools to be extraordinary.”

Leadership and Governance

The School Committee, chaired by the mayor, leads and governs the district through its policies and procedures. The School Committee is comprised of seven members: six members elected by the voters of Haverhill as School Committee Members, with the seventh member being the mayor. Sub-committees meet routinely, and report out to the whole committee at the bi-weekly school committee meetings.

Stakeholder interviews indicated that the community believes that the vast majority of elected officials, administrators, teachers, and support staff share a goal of providing a high-quality education to the district’s students. However, many of those interviewed noted inconsistencies and inequities among and between schools. Stakeholder interviews indicated themes of concern that purchases and staff allocations have not been consistently driven by student need. While the district and schools are working to improve student achievement, they are not driven by a District Improvement Plan (DIP). The DIP, which should set the overarching goals and direction for the district, expired in 2014. Despite an effort to update the DIP in 2015, it was never finalized. An updated DIP is needed to align priorities and focus spending for the district.

Curriculum and Instruction

The district has voiced a strong commitment to improving student achievement. The Haverhill Public Schools current mission statement reads “The Haverhill Public School system is dedicated to ensuring each learner meets or exceeds rigorous academic standards to become a citizen with integrity, skills, and the resources to succeed in the global community.” The district has made several recent major investments in pursuit of this mission. These investments include:

- Roll-out of STEM Scopes science curriculum K-8 (SY 18-19)
- Focus on access to technology infrastructure improvement & device purchasing (SY 14-19)
- Purchase of a new National Geographic English Language Development curriculum (SY 18-19)
- Increased use of professional learning communities (PLCs) across the district (SY 17-19)
- Implementation of the “Hillie Way” instructional model at HHS (SY 17-19)
- Hire of Supervisor of English Language Learner Programs (SY 17-18)
- Hire of Supervisor of English Language Arts (SY 18-19)
- Hire of HHS Special Education Department Head (SY 18-19)

Despite several large-scale curriculum roll-outs and accompanying textbook or online curriculum purchases, too many of the district’s textbooks are worn and dated. District-wide there is a lack of appropriate books that engage all learners in the love of reading. Libraries and classrooms across the school system want for an influx of fresh books that are culturally diverse and allow children to both see themselves and look into the lives of others. The district employs only three library/media specialists in its 17 schools. There has been no formal curriculum review cycle in place to evaluate curriculum in content areas and determine priorities for future investments.



In many schools, particularly at the middle school level, class sizes are high, with some middle schools reaching up to 35 students and beyond in a classroom. The large class sizes challenge the teachers' ability to meet the diverse learning needs that are inherent in urban education.

The district currently lacks a cohesive model of literacy instruction. Several schools implement the Lesley Literacy Collaborative (LLC) model, however many of those schools report not implementing the model with fidelity due to lack of staffing or PD time, as the model requires generous allocations of each of these sparse resources. LLC efficacy is also impacted by the turnover of trained teachers that leave the district. Similarly, some schools implement reading recovery as an intervention to support struggling readers, however the intensive model allows for far fewer students to receive assistance than data shows require the interventions. Due to the lack of a fully articulated literacy plan with fully defined curriculum maps, students sometimes read the same book more than once, in different grades, and there are questions about the rigor of instruction across the district. District-wide, there are 27 reading interventionists/coaches.

The purchase of online science and math curriculums across the K-8 grades challenges most schools due to a lack of devices to allow the students on-demand access to the rich online resources. The newly hired ELA supervisor is challenged by the lack of a cohesive early literacy program across the district, and inequities in staffing distribution across schools. The online math program offers challenges in terms of young students logging onto devices and teachers feeling that students need manipulatives and pencils in their hands when doing calculations. MCAS math scores across the district are lackluster in grades K-8, however, improvement in growth and overall scores were apparent on the grade 10 Math MCAS. Math coaching support is limited across the district, with a total of three full-time math specialists, and a cadre of math lead teachers attempting to meet the professional development needs of the district, in addition to their full-time jobs.

Movement Toward Instructional Consistency

In effort to improve core instruction, Haverhill High School has recently developed the "Hillie Way" of instructional practices that incorporates lesson components and strategies that consistently engage all students. The "Hillie Way" instructional model is now being adapted and shared across the district as a step toward defining and refining instruction. Throughout the district, there is evidence of pockets of amazing teachers who provide consistent instructional strategies that help students foster the skills to become independent learners and problem solvers.

Haverhill High School offers a wide variety of course offerings across three levels of classes: college prep, honors, and advanced placement, however, data is not consistently used to place students in the levels. Massachusetts High School Program of Studies (MassCore) is a recommended, rigorous course of study based on the standards in the Massachusetts' curriculum frameworks that aligns high school coursework with college and workforce expectations. The HHS is not yet MassCore aligned.

HHS has created a schedule that allows two professional learning meetings (PLCs) per week per content area, in addition to teacher prep time. This allows teachers to collaboratively plan and meet the needs of their scholars. The professional learning community model is a powerful way of working together that profoundly affects the practices of schooling. It requires the school staff to focus on learning rather than teaching, work collaboratively on matters related to learning, and hold itself accountable for the kind of results that fuel continual improvement. Some elementary schools and Haverhill High have carved time for PLCs out of their schedules, but not all, and most middle schools are unable to meet this challenge due



to large class-sizes and challenging schedules. Similarly, some elementary and middle schools have instituted intervention and extension blocks to support tier two and three interventions, but not all schedules have been designed in this manner, again forcing students to be pulled from instructional core to receive academic support services. HHS has instituted Universal Design For Learning (UDL) training for building and district staff. The goal of UDL is to use a variety of teaching methods to remove any barriers to learning and give all students equal opportunities to succeed. It is about building in flexibility that can be adjusted for every student's strengths and needs.

Lack of common planning time across the district leads to variation in instruction from classroom to classroom and school to school. In some classrooms, the materials and instruction are not aligned to the grade level frameworks. If teachers are to increase instructional rigor, they will need high-quality, standards-aligned curricular materials, increased instructional supports, differentiation of instruction, and more or reallocated time to learn and think as professionals.

English Language Development

English Language Development programs across the district had been without a leader for several years until an EL supervisor was hired last June. Since that time, the department has been working as a team to clean-up data, to purchase and implement a research-based English Language Development (ELD) curriculum, and to consider more inclusive ways of serving our EIs.

Currently, programs for beginner English Learners (ELs) are centered in a few schools. This frequently means newcomer students are not able to attend their neighborhood school with friends and siblings. Parents that are new to the country and struggling to understand the community have children in multiple schools and too often these schools lack staff with the ability to speak the language of the parents. It is the intention of the school district to return EL programs to neighborhood schools in order to support family access to and engagement in schools, as well as to limit transitions for students.

The vast majority of newcomer families in Haverhill speak Spanish. The district employs 2 Spanish speaking "interpreters". These two individuals interpret at IEP meetings, family events, parent conferences, and in emergency situations across the school district, they translate IEPs and school documents to be sent home, as well as support the registration of Spanish speaking families. Increased Spanish language translation and cultural competency is needed across the district.

Special Education

The Special Education Department has undergone significant turnover in leadership and teaching staff in recent years. Substantial efforts have been made to provide high-quality services to students with disabilities while simultaneously containing special education costs by developing appropriate in-district programs to allow students to receive a free and appropriate education within its community schools. However, at present, our continuum of service options for students with disabilities is not fully articulated and does not always allow for students to be educated in the least restrictive environment. Special education students should be receiving "core and more," meaning that special education services are in addition to the core instructional program. Our current special education programming lacks well-defined entrance and exit criteria and needs clearly defined and implemented staffing ratios.

In many cases, specialized services are offered in substantially separate classrooms where students are receiving an overly-modified curriculum, instead of in the general education classroom with



accommodations, supports and services brought to them in order to facilitate access to the general curriculum. The district has been identified by DESE as having a significant over-identification of students placed on the MCAS Alternate Assessment. This impacts the student's long-term likelihood of graduation with a standard high school diploma by allowing for a significantly modified curriculum to increase learning gaps.

The distribution of special education funds and staffing is presently spread across multiple schools and departments, obfuscating the extent of needs and staffing. Furthermore, the limited number of special educator administrative staff available to provide observation and feedback to the staff within the department is a significant weakness.

The Educational Support Professional (ESP) staff are an under-utilized resource across the district. ESPs throughout the district lack a planned professional development pathway and there is not currently written guidance relative to their assignment to students. Many districts are redirecting funds from paraprofessional staffing to maximize the number of highly-qualified, licensed special education staff available to best support the needs of students with disabilities and/or the number of administrative staff available to assist with the management of the department, including supervision and evaluation of special education staff.

This spring, a Coordinated Program Review (CPR) will be conducted by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, reviewing special education, English Language Learner Programs, and Career Vocational Technical Educational Programs at HPS. While each of these departments has new leadership and is working hard to fix systemic issues, previous reports have noted significant areas for growth, and some of these issues are not yet completely resolved.

Assessment

Data-driven educational decision making refers to the process by which educators examine assessment data to identify student strengths and deficiencies and apply those findings to their classroom practice. The process of looking at individual student performance through the critical examination of not only student outcomes, but also curriculum and instructional practices, yields data that helps teachers make informed instructional decisions that support improved outcomes for all students. Local assessments, including summative assessments (classroom tests and quizzes, performance-based assessments, portfolios) and formative assessments (homework, teacher observations, do-nows, student responses and reflections), are legitimate and viable sources of student data for this process.

Haverhill is early in the process of implementing a systemic approach to effectively using student assessment data to guide the development of individualized intervention strategies and large-group instructional revisions. In the 2017-2018 school year, the district purchased and began to implement in K-8, the Star 360 online assessment in reading and math. This program of interim and formative assessments offers a valid, reliable progress monitoring tool that allows for informed decisions about the student level mastery of specific standards, and blended learning through grouping and instructional suggestions for small and whole group work. The system is highly predictive of performance on the MCAS examination and of mastery of state-specific learning standards for reading, math, and early literacy. The program's online portal offers rich data resources to help pinpoint a student's abilities and areas for growth. However, the roll-out of Star 360 lacked the needed professional development and coaching required for the teachers to use the system to its full potential. These supports are now taking root.



Schools implementing the Lesley Literacy Collaborative model additionally use the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) to determine a student's independent and instructional reading levels. This data is collected at the school level and used to guide instruction, however, there is no district-wide platform on which the data lives and can be shared from school to school and year to year, in order to benchmark student achievement across time and schools. There are currently no district-wide, written language common assessments.

In mathematics, grades K-5 administer a common, cumulative benchmark assessment each trimester to support the monitoring of student progress. In grades 6-8, common assessments are administered at the end of each unit of study.

The high school does not yet have a robust system of data collection to support student achievement. HHS administration and staff are currently working together to create, revise, and refine assessments in all subject areas to assure that both instruction and assessment are MassCore aligned.

Despite these and other tools, the district has not yet embraced a culture in which data is used to drive continuous improvement at all levels. There remain too many places and times where data is collected without a clear purpose or impact on student learning. Data collection across the district is unwieldy and needs organization, systemization, and a place to live so that it is readily available to the end user.

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is designed to meet the requirements of the Education Reform Law of 1993. This law specifies that the testing program must:

- Test all public-school students in Massachusetts, including students with disabilities and limited English proficient students
- Measure performance based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks
- Report on the performance of individual students, schools, and districts

The latest data from the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), shows significant improvement for the Haverhill School District. The standardized test scores are the second set of scores produced by "next generation MCAS", a new form of the test that is being rolled out across the Commonwealth. In spring 2018, students in grades three through eight took the next generation test in English language arts, and mathematics. Students in grades five and eight took the old form of the science test called the "legacy MCAS", while 10th grade students took the legacy test in all three subjects. Beginning in the spring of 2019, all grades are taking the next generation test in all subjects, with the exception of science testing at the high school level, which will still use legacy for another year.

In previous years, Haverhill was considered to be in need of state intervention. In SY 17-18 the school system as a whole improved significantly enough to be removed from that distinction, specifically, the Tilton and the High School made a big leap in performance. Golden Hill and Consentino still need support and are engaged in school turn-around work.



Haverhill 2018 ELA MCAS Achievement K-8

Group	2017 Achievement	2018 Achievement	Change	2018 Target	Points	Reason
All Students	493.1	493.5	0.4	494.9	2	Improved Below Target
Lowest Performing	470.9	473.4	2.5	475.3	2	Improved Below Target
High needs	487.2	487.6	0.4	488.7	2	Improved Below Target
Econ. Disadvantaged	488.1	488.6	0.5	489.7	2	Improved Below Target
EL and Former EL	482.4	483.3	0.9	484.2	2	Improved Below Target
Students w/disabilities	479.9	479.5	-0.4	481.3	1	No Change

Haverhill 2018 ELA MCAS Achievement HHS

Group	2017 Achievement	2018 Achievement	Change	2018 Target	Points	Reason
All Students	94.6	96.1	1.5	96.1	3	Met Target
Lowest Performing	86.7	90.9	4.2	88.7	4	Exceeded Target
High needs	89.3	92.0	2.7	91.2	3	Met Target
Econ. Disadvantaged	90.7	92.6	1.9	92.5	3	Met Target
EL and Former EL	79.5	85.7	6.2	82.2	4	Exceeded Target
Students w/disabilities	84.9	87.5	2.6	87.2	3	Met Target



Haverhill 2018 Math MCAS Achievement K-8						
Group	2017 Achievement	2018 Achievement	Change	2018 Target	Points	Reason
All Students	492.8	491.8	-1.0	494.5	0	Declined
Lowest Performing	467.3	470.6	3.3	469.9	4	Exceeded Target
High needs	486.1	485.1	-1.0	487.6	0	Declined
Econ. Disadvantaged	486.7	485.4	-1.3	487.8	0	Declined
EL and Former EL	483.2	481.8	-1.4	485.0	0	Declined
Students w/disabilities	478.6	476.9	-1.7	480.1	0	Declined

Haverhill 2018 Math MCAS HHS						
Group	2017 Achievement	2018 Achievement	Change	2018 Target	Points	Reason
All Students	84.2	88.5	4.3	86	4	Exceeded Target
Lowest Performing	50.9	66.5	16.6	53.7	4	Exceeded Target
High needs	74.4	79.9	5.5	76.9	4	Exceeded Target
Econ. Disadvantaged	74.5	81.0	6.5	77.2	4	Exceeded Target
EL and Former EL	71.5	70.6	-.9	75.4	1	Exceeded Target
Students w/disabilities	64.8	72.7	7.9	67.7	4	Met Target

Student Support

Tiered Instruction. Despite the efforts of many dedicated and talented staff, the district lacks a fully articulated tiered system of interventions. The tier one instructional core should offer preventive and proactive measures to support all students in the general education setting. Yet, tier one is not fully articulated and lacks many of the tools and supports needed. Systems issues such as scheduling, teacher assignment and limited instructional resources, combined with a lack of focus on meeting the needs of all learners, results in many students being removed from the general education classroom to have their



educational needs met. At the tier two level, targeted small group instruction is available in some schools, but not in all schools. For example, at Haverhill High School, students with a study in their schedule can access the tutoring center for support in ELA and mathematics, however, staffing, scheduling and instructional materials impact the systemic availability of such tier two supports.

Tier three interventions include additional or unique instructional strategies beyond those typically available to all students. Tier three may include special education, English language development, school counseling services, and intensive and individualized academic interventions. Effective tier three services require the ongoing use of data, problem solving analysis, and frequent progress monitoring. The efficacy of tier three interventions varies across the district, with some schools implementing sophisticated data-based instructional cycles while others gather data, but do not tie the results to instructional change.

Social Emotional Learning. Haverhill Public Schools has several social emotional learning initiatives underway, including the ECLC planning initiative, BARR grant programs (Building Assets Reducing Risks), Classroom Dojo, Dean's List, Lesley Institute for Trauma Sensitivity, and Teaching with Poverty in Mind Study Groups. Multiple schools report being PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports) schools; however, indications that the program is not being implemented with fidelity are visible in many of these schools. The High School has begun some work around Safe Schools programming for LBGQT students, but these supports are in their infancy and have not yet spread systemically. There is no specific guidance or comprehensive plan for social emotional learning (SEL) across the district. Several families of English learners and students of color have specifically reached out seeking to discuss issues of racial inequities and racism in our schools. These parents are joined by a larger community of parents concerned about bullying and behavioral outbursts in our classrooms. While pockets of high quality social emotional learning initiatives exist across the district, research has clearly shown that to truly impact school culture they must be universally implemented.

The American School Counselors Association recommends one school counselor to every 250 students. This ratio may vary depending upon the level of need in the community and the concentration of disability-related programs within a school. Haverhill currently employs 19 school guidance and school adjustment counselors for our 6,000 pre-K-8 students, as well as 7 guidance counselors and 3 school adjustment counselors for our 1,800 high school students. The caseloads of these student support professionals vary widely across the district in terms of size and need.

It was noted in the MASBO Review of 2018 that "Districts are facing an ever-increasing number of students who present with social and emotional challenges which impact their ability to effectively participate in the education process but do not rise to the level that would require an Individualized Education Plan. The district may want to consider establishing a regular education alternative program or school for those students who are socially maladjusted but do not qualify for special education services." Indeed, school leaders and families are frustrated by the unmet social emotional and behavioral needs of some of our students. These students are at high risk of drop out and require smaller, flexible learning communities and more individualized attention to succeed. The Gateway program and night school are examples of such programming presently available at HHS; however, these programs are limited in scope and focused squarely on high school aged students. Typically, urban communities of the size and complexity of Haverhill offer alternative programming beginning at the middle school level.

Attendance. With an average daily attendance rate of 93%, the city's overall attendance rate is close to the state average of 94.6%. However, the chronic absenteeism rate (missing more than 10% of the school year) for the district is a full 10% greater than the state average for chronic absenteeism. Haverhill's



chronic absenteeism rate is 44%, meaning that close to half of the students miss more than 10% of the school year. Below is a breakdown of chronic absenteeism by school.

Haverhill Percentage of Chronically Absent Students by School	
Bradford	13
Hunking	10
Bartlett	34
Consentino	33
Crowell	27
Nettle	21
Golden Hill	25
Greenleaf	46
HALT	73
HHS	29
Whittier	16
Moody	24
Pen Lake	17
Silver Hill	6
Teach	45
Tilton	26
Walnut Square	13

Human Resources and Professional Development

The district employs 546 professional FTEs and while 98% of the staff is licensed, it appears, in some cases, that teachers are teaching outside of their license. The district employs 970 staff, including teachers and related services professionals, educational support professionals, custodial staff, cafeteria workers, administrators, clerical staff, transportation staff, and others. The staff is 83% female, 95% white, and 91% of evaluated staff were granted a performance rating of proficient or exemplary by their evaluator in the 2016-2017 school year. The staff retention rate in 2018 for the district was 86%, which is equal to the state-wide staff retention rate for all school systems.

Many teachers and staff members interviewed were frustrated by the professional development provided by the district. The frustration appeared to emanate from both the structure and content of the PD. PD time is regulated by the bargaining agreement with the teachers' union. Time includes a day prior to the opening of school, a November full-day PD, a series of five early release day 3-hour PDs, ten 2-hour curriculum meetings, and ten 50-minute building-based meetings, for a total of 55 hours available for PD.



However, the curriculum meetings and building meetings are held at the end of the school day and frequently begin late or have staff arriving late, as student transportation issues are common. Teachers report a lack of choice in the PD they receive and many report that the PD is too superficial to support them in the implementation of the desired outcome. Those providing the PD agree that PD is not sufficiently focused and report feeling bound by the contractual expectations and in need of more time to adequately support schools and teachers. Those staff that have been with the district for several years report initiative fatigue and several report that a long-term plan for curriculum review is needed.

Financial and Asset Management

Haverhill Public Schools is a district with many assets and great possibility. However, a review of data and documents supports that the district also faces substantial challenges. The lower-than-state average school spending, per pupil expenditures, and teacher salaries, combined with a large percentage of high needs and high poverty students, leaves the district with substantial hurdles. The annual appropriation for the Haverhill Public Schools is largely based on available state and local revenues, as determined by the mayor and the city council. District Facts & Comparisons (based on latest data available on <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles>) are as follows:

- Net school spending 103% requirement vs. state average 120%. (FY 2017)
- Total expenditure per pupil \$13,071 vs. state average \$16,014 (FY 2017)
- Student/teacher ratio 13.7:1 vs. state average 13.0:1 to 1 (FY 18)
- Hispanic population 35% total enrollment vs. state average 20%(FY 18)
- Economically disadvantaged population 47.1% vs. state average 32% (FY 18)
- Students with disabilities 23.2% vs. state average 17.7% (FY 18)

MASBO's District Review completed in August of 2018, pointed to the immediate need for improved financial tracking, forecasting, controls, and audits in order to keep the district moving in the right direction. Specific recommendations included:

- A more robust and transparent budget process, including closer oversight of staffing and budget allocations to assure expenditures are allocated to the proper funding source and monitored across the school year to support appropriate spending
- The implementation of a position control so that positions cannot be created or adjusted in the payroll system without proper approval and budgetary support
- Training for principals, department managers and administrative staff to ensure that business office practices and procedures are clearly understood and consistently followed
- Consistency in accounts payable practices, including the proactive practice of having accounts payable staff contact the originating department whenever invoices are received that do not have a corresponding claim voucher
- Clarification of responsibilities for various aspects of grants management and administration

Close attention to detail has been required to allow the district to begin to clean up our data. For many years, Haverhill's data reporting efforts have occurred in isolation without conversations between school and technical staff and without those compiling the data understanding the full rationale for or impact from the data collected. As a data work group has formed, the importance of the data and its impact on children, schools and resources has been highlighted. The team has jelled as a working group and has already begun to implement practices and protocols which will clean the data, allowing for more transparency in reporting and opportunity for funding.



Equity. Concerns of inequities across and within schools echoed in interviews with staff, families, and community members. Inequities were specifically and consistently noted in terms of facilities, class-size, and resources, including teaching staff and curricular materials. These inequities were visibly obvious during school and classroom observations and, in many cases, correlate with student outcomes.

Separate from, but related to concerns regarding inequities, were concerns about school assignment across the school district. Concerns were noted by parents of kindergarten students seeking both rationale for K-assignments and to be informed in a more-timely manner about their child's K assignment. Many parents reported that K assignments in the past have been shared with families well into the summer months. Families also noted that while there are zones within the city, it appears that there are many "special permission" exceptions to these zoning expectations. A review of student assignments across the district supports assertions that a wide variety of students do not attend school in their home zone. Out of zone placement appears to occur for both programmatic and individual reasons. Additionally, many parents report that the Hunking School was originally scheduled to have a middle-school magnet STEM program which was to draw from across the community, to enhance more equitable access to the school. While it appears that initial assignments made space for some out-of-zone students, no process was put in place for the continuance of the practice. In spite of these rather daunting obstacles to academic performance, the combined school percentile ranking for the district is the twenty-eighth percentile.

Facilities. Across the school district, overcrowding is an issue, particularly at the middle school level. Two years ago, the new Hunking School opened its doors to almost 1,100 K-8 students. The beautiful facility was engineered for 21st century learning and offers a one to one technology initiative. This school year the Consentino School was approved by the Mass School Building Authority for state funding and assistance in major renovation or reconstruction of the school. This project will take four to five years to complete. The building presently suffers from roof leaks causing major water infiltration in winter months when snow covers the roof, and will require interim roof repair or replacement to remain viable as a safe place for students and teachers. Community members have raised concern about the condition of other buildings. In particular, the Whittier School has been noted for facilities concerns and is currently out to bid for an engineering study to support long and short-term next steps for the structure. Regardless of the condition of facilities, excessively large class-sizes impact student learning and teacher morale. The reallocation of school spaces and the right sizing of our buildings is currently being explored as a short-term solution to overcrowding as we reimagine the Consentino School.

The district's small, but highly dedicated facilities crew handles day-to-day needs of the 17 buildings in terms of electrical, plumbing, and minor repairs. However, five of the buildings are over 100 years old, and even several of the "newer" buildings are now coming to an age where they require capital investment to replace roofs, boilers, HVAC systems, and to upgrade classroom and shared space to support 21st century learning. These pressing needs require that the district wring value out of each dollar it spends, by looking for economy and efficiencies that will allow us to meet our pressing needs.

Transportation. Haverhill, having over 40 square miles of urban, suburban and rural land area, possesses a significant transportation challenge. The Transportation Department has invested in Traversa Routing software, but implementation has been slow and the need for training within the department is ongoing, leaving many of the school bus routes still drawn by hand. The district has a large number of students in need of specialized transportation to locations within and outside of the district. The systems and structures for bidding on these routes and monitoring the selected contractors require complete revision in order to improve the efficiency and safety of our transportation services.



In-district transportation of specialized populations is extensive, as programs are frequently not available in neighborhood schools for higher-need special education students and newcomer English Language Learners. It was reported early in the school year by parents and staff that these students were frequently arriving at school late and leaving early due to bussing demands. The Transportation Department has put a great deal of effort into fixing this problem across the school year; however, transportation remains an area of needed growth across the school district.

Closing Thoughts

As a school system, our most powerful resource is our community; our staff, students, families and all the members of Hillie Nation. However, the systems and structures we have in place are not aligned to harness the power of this amazing community. We lack a consistent vision of excellence that guides all students to reach their potential.

Consistency in curriculum, instruction, materials and facilities will support ALL students by providing rigorous learning opportunities and adding real-time scaffolds that address student needs. These supports must be academic in nature, but simultaneously must address the social, emotional, and basic daily needs of our students, as too many of our students feel the impact of poverty on a daily basis.

Equity refers to the principle of *fairness*. In Haverhill, a variety of systemic barriers present roadblocks to educational equity for some of our students. Examples of barriers include user fees for athletics, entrance exams that do not include all students for rigorous academic programs, fees for summer credit recovery, tuition-based kindergarten, and a lack of translation and interpreting services. Other barriers include excessively large class sizes in some schools, and too many facilities that are not ready for 21st century learning. This lack of equity exacerbates opportunity gaps and segregates our schools and our community. While Haverhill is a wonderful place for some students to attend school, as a community we need to rally behind all of our students and provide equitable access to the many rich opportunities our schools offer.

The educational achievement of students tends to rise or fall in direct relation to the expectations placed upon them. Students who are expected to learn more or perform better generally do so, while those held to lower expectations usually achieve less. These lowered expectations impact attendance, scores on standardized assessments, suspension rates, and ultimately graduation rates for subgroups of students.

To move from good to great and to uphold high expectations for themselves and their students, our teachers need resources. Resources such as a well-defined curriculum based on the standards, research-based instructional materials, and professional development that supports teacher learning.

Haverhill is unique and complex with deep needs, systemic inequities, and expansive potential. The community is diverse, dynamic and invested in change. As a school district, we must stop chasing the instructional flavor of the month, make a commitment to what we believe our students need to know, and how we intend to get them there. We must define our course, and hold steady to that course in a relentless pursuit of improved outcomes for our children. Our 8,000 students are excited for the opportunities that await and their future is in our hands. Thank you for this exciting opportunity.

Margaret Marotta
Superintendent of Schools