

Report of the
Superintendent of Schools

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I am honored to continue serving the students of Dover, Sherborn, and Boston alongside many talented educators, supportive families, and dedicated community members. Through the superintendent entry process, I have sought to deepen my knowledge of the District through conversations with stakeholders, observations of systems and routines, data collection and analysis, and a review of documents and policies. Assistant Superintendent Denton Conklin engaged in a similar study focused primarily on teaching and learning. Consistency between findings has lent validity to the themes and recommendations that resulted. The Superintendent's Report of Entry Findings, as summarized below, highlights the strengths, challenges, hopes, and aspirations of the District and its constituents.

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools are rooted in academic excellence and committed to sustained success and ongoing improvement. By way of an academically rich and rigorous curriculum, extensive enrichment events and activities, highly competitive athletic teams and clubs, and a strong fine and performing arts program, students have an array of opportunities to develop their intellectual, physical, and artistic abilities. As evidenced by multiple measures, including standardized test scores, graduation rates, college enrollment, and alumni accounts, our students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in postsecondary life. As reported by interviewees and survey submissions, the D-S Public Schools are the community's greatest asset and the reason most families choose to live and raise their children in Dover and Sherborn.

Moreover, parents, educators, and students consider the Dover-Sherborn community itself to be a significant strength for its small size, educational focus, and rural landscape, and they hold a high regard and deep appreciation for the people and places that embody both towns, which throughout the past 10 years have become more diverse. The METCO program is also referenced by many as being an asset that allows students to learn cooperatively alongside peers whose perspectives and backgrounds differ from their own and promotes skills such as empathy, critical thinking, and problem-solving that prepare students for a diverse, multicultural world.

Of significant value noted by students, parents, and caregivers are the faculty and staff, who are described as helpful, caring, supportive, flexible, understanding, fun, enthusiastic, dedicated, and hard-working. These professionals are revered for the strong relationships they have built with their students and for their efforts to get to know each individual and "uncover their unique gifts and talents." Staff also expressed a deep respect for their colleagues and the positive climate and culture that contribute to a collaborative work environment.

The focus of the D-S Public Schools on the whole child is a strength acknowledged by a significant portion of the staff and community. The District's decade-long work with Challenge Success has led to greater balance for students, with research-based adjustments made to schedules, homework, and assessments. A "silver lining" of pandemic learning has been the marked shift in recognizing the importance of social-emotional wellness as a precursor to learning, and the efforts made to expand programming and personnel to meet the growing need for mental and behavioral support has been well-received. A recent equity audit reinforced the value of students' sense of belonging and its correlation to academic achievement, student motivation, classroom engagement, and improved health. Together these measures have fostered

a student-centered environment grounded in opportunities for learning and growth across multiple developmental realms.

The complete Strategy for District Improvement was approved by the D-S School Committees in September 2023. Initiatives were outlined in each of the following five areas:

- ***Excellence & Innovation in Learning:*** Maintain academic excellence and rigor while adapting practices to prepare graduates for success in a rapidly changing world;
- ***Challenge & Support All Students:*** Enhance programming to ensure all students are able to achieve their full potential within a supportive learning environment;
- ***Professional Learning & Growth:*** Expand opportunities for professional growth and collaboration among educators in support of the District’s vision for teaching and learning;
- ***Family & Community Engagement:*** Engage families and community members in the strategic pursuit of a shared vision and mission; and
- ***Safe & Sustainable Spaces:*** Evaluate and update facilities to ensure safe, sufficient, and sustainable spaces amid a changing educational and environmental landscape.

Understanding that maintaining an exceptional school district requires continuous reflection and a sustained drive for improvement, these priorities will inform our collective work for the next three to five years as we seek to “inspire, challenge, and support all students as they discover and pursue their full potential.”

The District is eternally grateful to the taxpayers who provide a strong financial foundation for an excellent PreK–12 program. The D-S Public Schools continue to benefit from the generous support of community organizations such as the PTOs, POSITIVE, Boosters, Friends of the Performing Arts (FoPA), and Mudge Foundation, among others. As a result, students have access to dynamic learning experiences in the classroom, on the field, on the stage, and through clubs and activities that challenge and inspire. Dover-Sherborn is an exceptional school district in both the academic and extracurricular arenas, and a source of pride for the community and its members.