

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 sought to deepen my knowledge of the District through conversations with stakeholders, observations of systems and routines, the collection and analysis of data, 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 lends validity to the themes and recommendations that resulted. The Superintendent's Report of Entry Findings highlighted the strengths, challenges, hopes and aspirations of the District and its constituents as summarized below.

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools are rooted in academic excellence and committed to sustained success and continuous 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. Evidenced by multiple measures, including standardized test scores, graduation rates, college enrollment and alumni accounts, students acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in postsecondary life. As reported by multiple interviewees and survey submissions, the schools are the community's greatest asset and are the reason most families choose to live and raise their children in Dover and Sherborn.

Parents, educators and students named the community itself as a significant strength. With its small size, educational focus and rural landscape, there is high regard for and deep appreciation of the people and places that embody Dover-Sherborn. Over the past ten years, the towns have become more diverse, a positive noted by several respondents. Many also referenced the METCO program as an asset, allowing students to learn cooperatively alongside peers whose perspectives and backgrounds are different from their own, promoting 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, described as helpful, caring, supportive, flexible, understanding, fun, enthusiastic, dedicated and hard-working. Many revere the strong relationships that educators build with their students, seeking to get to know each as an individual and "uncover their unique gifts and talents." Staff also expressed deep respect for their colleagues and the positive climate and culture that contribute to a collaborative work environment.

The schools' focus 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 is a marked shift in recognizing the importance of social-emotional wellness as a precursor to learning; many noted the efforts made to expand programming and personnel to meet the growing need for mental and behavioral support. The 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 presented to and approved by the school committees in September 2023. Initiatives were outlined in each of 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.
- **Safe & Sustainable Spaces** - Evaluate and update facilities to ensure safe, sufficient and sustainable spaces amidst 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 drive 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 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 an array of clubs and activities that serve to challenge and inspire. Dover-Sherborn is an exceptional school district in both the academic and extracurricular arenas, and a continued source of pride for the community and its members.