

Superintendent Priority Report

Milton Public Schools



SUPERINTENDENT PETER BURROWS

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From Your Superintendent

In sharing this priority report, I must start by thanking the countless members of the Milton Public Schools learning community for sharing your hopes, your insights, and your commitment to the success of every student in our schools. The investment in excellence, rigor, wellbeing, and equity came through in every interaction I've had as I've talked with students, staff, families, and community. While this listening and learning phase of my entry plan had specific, articulated objectives, one thing that arose from the experience of meeting with the MPS community was a feeling of great optimism about what we can achieve together in the years ahead.

The listening and learning phase of my entry plan involved significant outreach to engage our entire community to more clearly understand who we are, where we are, and what we hope to be. Over the course of these last months, my awareness of the diverse perspectives of MPS has grown significantly. This diversity is one of Milton's key strengths.

In addition, as I shared in my listening and learning forums, this process was also intended to create a comprehensive "current-state" analysis of MPS. For us to build towards the excellence we want for our students, we must understand what's needed from the entire community. Without collectively understanding what needs to happen to realize our academic objectives for all students, we waste considerable energy. We need to focus on what will really impact the lives of our students. This report serves two functions: it provides an overview of Milton's strengths and opportunities as shared by our community, and an analysis of some of the key structural components of the district that are foundational to a clear path forward.

I look forward to all that is ahead as we work together to strengthen our schools and concentrate all of our resources on the success of each and every student in the Milton Public Schools.



With gratitude,

Peter Burrows, D.Ed.
Superintendent, Milton Public Schools



Listening and Learning

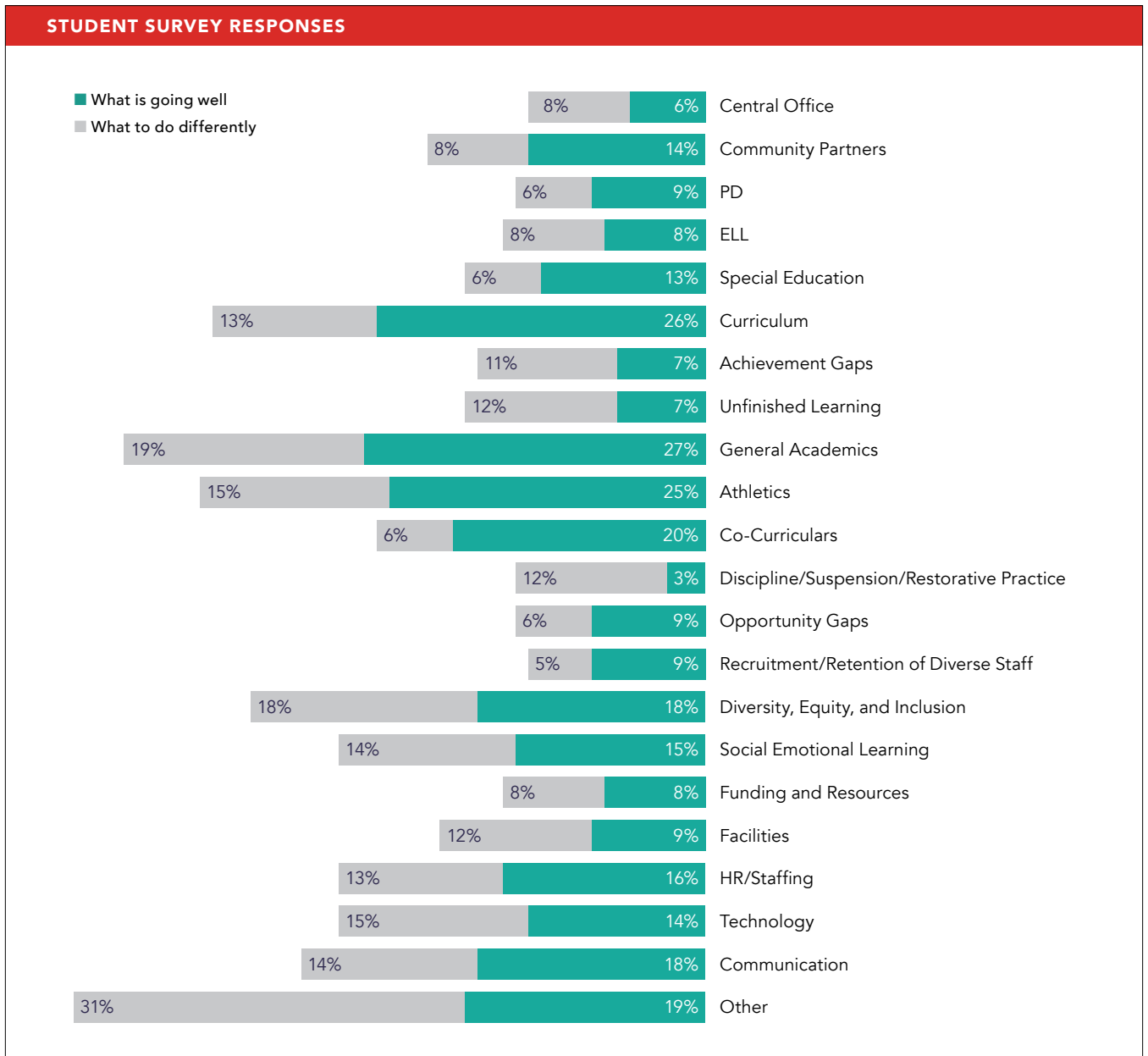
Entry Plan Survey

The Entry Plan Survey was designed to allow students, staff, parents, and community members an opportunity to share vital information about their experiences of Milton Public Schools. **The survey contained the following questions:**

“ What is going well?
What would you like
MPS to continue to do?

“ What would you like to see
Milton Schools do differently
or begin to do?

“ What advice do you
have for Superintendent
Burrows?





Student Survey Results

The highest percentage of comments from students were focused on...

General Academics, Curriculum, Athletics, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), and "other".

When asked "What's going well?" over 20% of student comments mentioned:



26%
curriculum



27%
academics



25%
athletics



20%
co-curriculars

GENERAL ACADEMICS

““ The teachers are [phenomenal] and they are really down to earth and helpful. I really enjoy all the opportunities that MPS provides and the community surrounding us. I would like MPS to continue fostering fun and engaging events to maintain school spirit.

The teachers are nice and supportive, and make it so I am not afraid to ask for help.

ATHLETICS

““ I think that everything is going well. The sports are all going good.

CO-CURRICULARS

““ Communication has been excellent and the structure of the after school programs has been great.

...the clubs are good, the school library is also good, my classes are interesting...

I like all the different varieties of clubs.

When asked "What should be done differently?" the only area that exceeded 20% of comments was "other." General academics, athletics, DEI, and technology were mentioned by greater than 15% but less than 20% of students.

GENERAL ACADEMICS

““ I would like them to allow for more advanced classes at earlier ages. Additionally, I would like them to consider ways to make the school a more welcoming place, specifically for neurodiverse kids. Moreover, I feel the school could do a better job in looking over old curriculums for outdated language and information.

ATHLETICS

““ I would like to see more sports teams/clubs in Milton Schools so students have a wider variety of sports to play.

The different fundraisers are good. I would like MPS to continue making students feel welcome and having fun activities. And having school sports teams.

DEI

““ I like the teachers. I think MPS should continue to hire diverse teachers who care about us.

Teacher helping kids even if they don't ask. Also, the athletics and clubs.

I wish the school would care more about including kids.

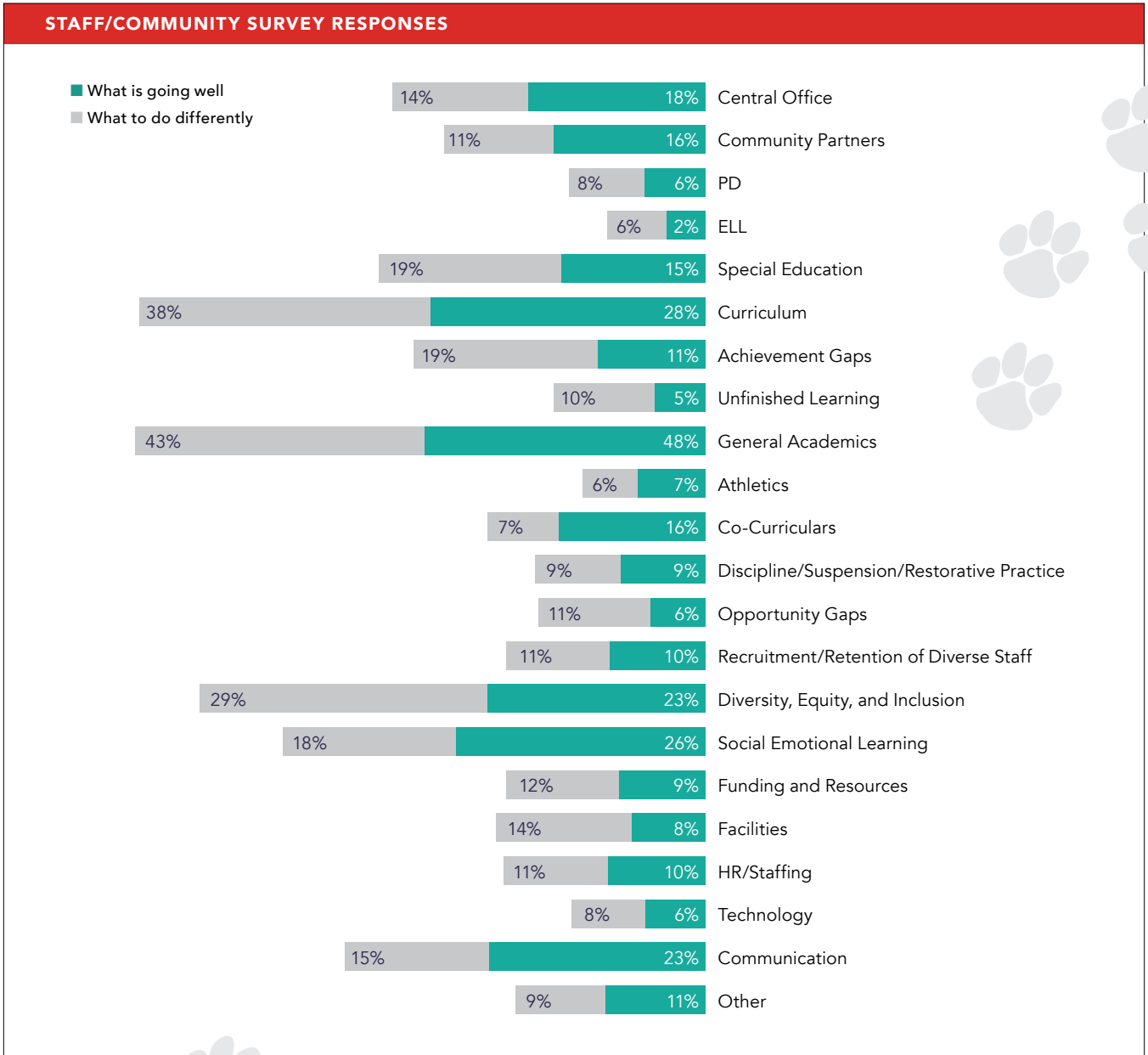
TECHNOLOGY

““ I think the WiFi could be better and it would be nice to have our own Chromebooks again.



Staff/Community Survey Results

Similar to staff/community respondents, students show concern in some areas and celebrate general academics and diversity, equity, and inclusion. However, students voice concerns for areas such as technology and athletics that are not mentioned at equal levels by staff/community respondents.





Staff/Community Survey Results (continued)

The highest percentage of comments from staff/community were focused on curriculum, general academics, and DEI. In each of these areas, similar percentages of respondents felt that “things were going well” as felt that “things should be done differently.”

When the staff/community was asked “What’s going well?”



It is worth noting that **staff/community mentioned general academics are going well at a much higher rate than students (21% difference).**

CURRICULUM

“ The honors program in English has been very inspiring for my students as it has challenged them to think critically about a broad range of difficult topics. I could not have asked for better material.

I feel like staff as a whole embrace the ideas of growth mindset and respect the students as whole human beings that all have the capacity to learn. Evidence of this belief can be found in the high academic expectations teachers have for students. I think on the whole students and staff respect each other and classrooms feel like true learning spaces where students are actively developing their skills and proficiencies. I feel like the district’s focus on growth mindset and personalized learning really supports both students and staff to cultivate this kind of environment.

GENERAL ACADEMICS

“ We have had a great experience with staff identifying areas of concern and supporting ongoing specific needs of our two students. The teachers and the administrators are easy to access, responsive to questions and concerns, and really demonstrate that they connect with the students.

My children have been so happy with their teachers and classmates. My son received reading intervention in first grade and was so grateful for the growth he made in 6-8 weeks. Teachers have been very responsive and supportive of my children.

DEI

“ Wonderful, caring, loving environment for our children to grow up in! Great respect for diversity and exemplifying the benefits of learning from all. Wonderful opportunity to run and jump and be a kid and to be welcomed as you are.

The amazing educators and staff! We have the best here in Milton. Our kids are in wonderful hands each and every day. Would love to continue efforts on fostering inclusivity and diversity for all students.

I also love the work that Milton does in regards to diversity, equity, and inclusion and SEL. I really hope that Milton continues to foster these values as being equally important to academic success.

SEL

“ The teachers are [phenomenal] and they are really down to earth and helpful. I really enjoy all the opportunities that MPS provides and the community surrounding us. I would like MPS to continue fostering fun and engaging events to maintain school spirit.

The teachers are nice and supportive, and make it so I am not afraid to ask for help.

COMMUNICATION

“ I am loving the clear, consistent, and meaningful communication from central this year. Thank you!”

Communication has been excellent from the top-down. Everyone in positions of authority is well-invested in the kids, and teachers have been great. Teacher communication is more variable, but different styles are to be expected. I love the emphasis on social emotional learning, and prioritizing DEI.



Staff/Community Survey Results (continued)

When asked “What should be done differently?” curriculum, general academics, and DEI exceeded 20%.

CURRICULUM

“ Ideally, I’d get a syllabus or some kind of curriculum overview for each year, broken down by quarter/trimester. My intention is really in order to reinforce or support any concepts on the home front. Right now, it’s just really hard for me to follow all the various email updates, which is pretty heterogeneous from teacher-to-teacher and even week-to-week.

I would like to see more writing assignments at the middle and high school level. Writing is critical in college and beyond and students need a lot of practice in writing clear sentences and marshaling clear arguments. I’d also like to see more books assigned as part of the English and World Studies curricula in both the middle and high school. This is the best introduction many students will get to a range of authors from different backgrounds and cultures, including the Great Books classics, and more is better.

Finally, I do not believe MPS’s STEM pathway has lived up to the billing. I do not believe my children are receiving the kind of science/STEM intensive education that we learned about at open house. We were also told that the Spanish portion of the STEM pathway would be on par with the amount of French the French Immersion kids would be learning. But unfortunately it is not. I don’t necessarily want “Spanish immersion” but I feel our kids are not quite getting a good Spanish education.

GENERAL ACADEMICS

“ We need more specialists in academic areas i.e. math, reading etc.... Would like to see Milton spend some money in these areas.

Proactively share individual student assessment data, and help parents understand how the Personalized Learning pillar will come to life relative to my student’s data.

Higher bar of rigor. Clearer communication about academic expectations by grade level (what are they learning? What should they know at the end of the year?)

I am hoping to see MPS offer alternative classes like the trades, or intro to the trades. This would inspire the students who learn outside the box to think of different career opportunities. We, as a society, need more electricians, plumbers, nurses. Not all students can afford the expensive 4 year colleges. We need to embrace and highlight more realistic opportunities like community college, trade schools. I would like to see MPS start to talk about these different opportunities.

DEI

“ Professional development around restorative justice, DEIB, curriculum, etc. are critical. Implementation of the reporting system was a wonderful step. (Now we need to hear more about what is going on - in general - and what is being done about it).

My children have only had white female teachers. It’s not reflective of the community we live in. Need to hire more diversely.

To allow for more diversity of thought and allow for all voices, from the left and right, to be heard and respected.

My family would like the curriculum to focus more on CRT principles. I would rather my child learn more about actual history and holidays than a sanitized version. I often have to tell my child the real version after what they’ve learned in the classroom. More social, emotional learning would be great too. These are the things that last a lifetime, even when you forget how to do long division!





Staff/Community Survey Results (continued)

Special education, SEL, and communication show rates of comments above 15% about things being done differently and things going well. Special Education and its supportive structures in the district are not working well for some parents and staff.

“ How Special Education and any type of plans are handled. There are unrealistic accommodations that are added to plans. Elementary adds as many accommodations as possible when transitioning to the middle school that are near impossible to implement with all the plans that are in one classroom. There is a huge divide of classes that get support from SPED staff and classes that do not. This is creating an inequitable workload. Some teachers are able to just focus on content and have others to provide the accommodations. Other teachers have to do it all with no support. There are very few logical systems in place.

“ More open communication with parents of children with special education services. We usually don't know what services are available, or what would apply to our child. Helping parents to understand how IEPs work. Parents often have to navigate the process alone and don't understand a lot of the terminologies. It creates an us against them feeling.

“ I would like to see more descriptions for programs (co-taught, neurodiverse, language based) and criteria for what students would fit in those programs.

SEL

“ My kids have been happy with the schools over all. Teachers have been very responsive. The high school experience has been particularly strong. Meaningful inclusion and SEL could be more intentional and better communicated. Restorative justice should not be a secret.

Stay focused on academic excellence and less SEL.

Additionally, social emotional learning is super important, but sometimes it feels like there is too much of a focus on it. I don't know what the answer is, but teachers cannot simultaneously be therapists and accomplish all that is demanded of them academically. I know that children cannot learn if they do not feel seen and safe, but at the same time if we spend too much time on that, academics suffer.

COMMUNICATION

“ Finally, and I know this is already a focus of the superintendent, but the communication from the district is impossible to keep up with. There are lots of emails, but they are all coming from different email addresses--sometimes the name of the school, sometimes the name of the administrator, and some from “no reply”. That means, when I go to search for something, I never find it on the first attempt because I have to try a few search terms to figure out where it was and who sent it. Also, while the “smore” software makes things pretty, it makes information hard to search for.

Transparency and clearer communication from a district level. What other schools are doing well, knowledge sharing, etc. Creating equitable classrooms throughout the district with up-to-date technology both in-classroom and home communications/portals.

It would be great if there could be more ongoing communication with parents about how their children are doing in their academics. I have seen some improvements in the last few years about teachers communicating what topics are being covered that week, but depending on the classroom, it can be very rare to have graded work (tests, quizzes) sent home between report card periods. The parent-teacher conference is wonderful. Is there a way to have more of those? I know you are always allowed to reach out to your child's teacher if you are concerned, but I wish there was more of a culture of parents being part of the child's academic team. We can be critical partners in supporting our child's learning (both filling gaps as well as nurturing strengths and areas of interest).



Listening and Learning: forums, individual and group meetings

A listening and learning forum occurred at each MPS school to bring stakeholders together to learn more about the entry planning process and to provide a platform from which to share both personal and shared experience. Small groups discussed **(1) likes/highlights/programs and processes to continue, and (2) areas of focus/priority/improvement to consider**. Findings from the six forum events were fairly consistent regarding thematic content.

In addition, I spent a day in each school visiting with staff to better understand their experience of MPS and their vision for change. I met in smaller groups with grade level teams or departments, and have incorporated those findings with the forum feedback, categorized under the three priority areas (excluding School Committee Governance). While there was divergence in shared experience across MPS staff, there was a surprising degree of convergence across the three priority areas outlined below. There is also much consistency in statements across the survey data and information shared through the listening and learning tour.

Below are the themes that were shared and some further information to provide an overview of stakeholder experience and perspective on areas MPS should address.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

A. Special Education

- Establish a response-to-intervention model used with fidelity across the district.
- Improve general and special education coordination.
- Research current out-of-district placements and better understand where students' needs are not being met.

B. Curriculum and Assessment

- Determine how to make measurable progress on closing the achievement gaps for subgroups and what measures are important to assess.
- Review curricula to align to current best practice in literacy, math, and multi-tiered systems of support.
- Establish a shared understanding of "rigor" across elementary, middle, and high school. Better understand how individual students are academically challenged at Pierce without honors classes.
- Support, grow, and celebrate French Immersion and English Innovation Pathway programming; conduct more analysis to determine if and how inequity is present across all elementary programming; consider how all students are served.

C. Academic Coherence

- Investigate how to make school transitions more seamless for all students.
- Research the impact and efficacy of tracking College Prep, Honors and AP.
- Determine what the barriers are to coherence within the curriculum and the structures that enable collaboration, such as scheduling.
- Address the silos that exist between and among buildings and design a system that brings coherence and consistency.
- Review professional development at the elementary and secondary levels and shared collaborative time with an equity lens.



Listening and Learning (continued)

CLIMATE, CULTURE, AND WELLBEING

A. Student Voice and Wellness

- Involve students more centrally in decision-making.
- Make learning more student-centered and consider whole child wellness in the design of the daily schedule.
- Look at school start times to align with adolescent development.

B. Parent and Community Engagement

- Increase the school/parent connection through collaborative multiple pathways.
- Foster belonging in each school community.
- Consider how to solicit community feedback in meaningful ways to support intentional diversity in our community.

C. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

- Increase recruitment/retention of staff of color.
- Grow and support the application of restorative practices for adults and students in MPS schools.
- Work with the community to better understand the “why” of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging practices.
- Elevate BIPOC parent voices.

D. MPS Staff

- Utilize teachers to determine what students need; support greater teacher voice.
- Focus on continuity of staff as our most valuable asset.
- Address the initiative fatigue that staff experience and design systems to provide clarity of purpose and direction.





Listening and Learning (continued)

OPERATIONS, FACILITIES, AND FINANCE

A. Systems Development

- Build systems across MPS to address equity of resources, continuity of programming, and operational efficiency.
- Create a more rigorous, systematic, and equitable hiring process.
- Design systems that leverage proactive approaches and promote objective understanding.
- Identify all stakeholders and design systems that are collaborative and inclusive.

B. Communication

- Review communication systems at district and school level.
- Address transparency through stronger, more targeted communication on curriculum, decision making, and school and district operations.
- Establish common platforms across grade-levels, schools, and district to communicate effectively with stakeholders.

C. Facilities

- Pursue needed expansion of learning spaces with an eye towards modernizing the learning environment.
- Problem solve current space restrictions and redesign programming to support greater student learning.
- Create both short- and long-term plans to address facilities realities.

D. Human Resources

- Build a 21st century human capital strategy and core capability for the district.
- Investigate creative programming to increase hiring staff of color.
- Ensure high quality professional development and staff wellness to increase longevity and prevent burnout.





Assessment



Priority Area Assessment

The entry plan outlines four priority areas that were analyzed to build a comprehensive assessment of MPS systems and structure and establish better understanding of the student experience that is at the core of our mission:



In coordination with central office, building, and curriculum leaders, **the following analysis provides an overview of key systems and structures** from MPS leaders to build out clarity and purpose as an organization.

School Committee Relations

Executive Summary

A strong School Committee/Superintendent relationship is essential to establish a governance structure that is able to support the needs of students, staff, and community. I have worked closely with the School Committee to build a vision that grounds our work in best practice on effective and impactful governance. This includes a focus on ongoing governance learning and the establishment of systems to codify roles, responsibilities, and practices. Work has included a review of all salient School Committee material, the design of governance retreats, and the development of school committee procedures.



Analysis

In order to better understand the starting point for my work with the Milton School Committee, I reviewed the following materials:

- **School Committee official documents**
- **School Committee minutes, meeting video, and meeting packet information**
- **School Committee policy and procedural documentation**

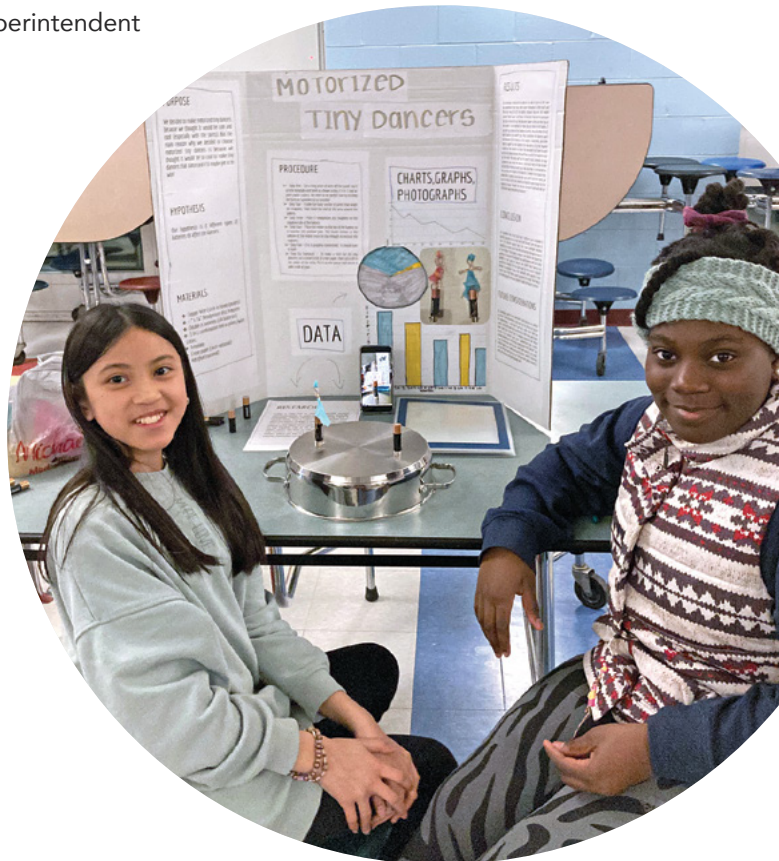
In addition, I met with current and former School Committee members, central office administration, and staff to better understand strengths and opportunities.

Based on my review and analysis, I found that, as is true with many public bodies, there have been shifts year to year in how the School Committee functions relative to changes in central office administration and changes in School Committee membership. In addition, the pandemic had a significant impact on all aspects of MPS leadership and its operations.

While the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) is a powerful resource, more internal systems development needs to take place in order to support a strong School Committee and Superintendent partnership. This system's development would allow for a smoother onboarding for new School Committee members and provide greater clarity around procedure, communication, visioning, and all the other critical work that School Committee members do.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

1. Develop annual cycle of governance learning between Superintendent and School Committee.
2. Establish School Committee retreats that create space for governance study.
3. Support the development of School Committee protocols centered on leveraging the unique qualities of the Superintendent and School Committee partnership.
4. Create clarity for newly-elected School Committee members by adopting an onboarding process that is systems-driven.



Academic Excellence

Executive Summary

Academic excellence is the core of our work at Milton Public Schools. Our mission is to ensure that every student in Milton is adequately prepared to thrive. To fulfill this mission the district must ensure every teacher in every classroom has the knowledge, skills, resources, and support to deliver rigorous and engaging instruction that meets the needs of every student. The Milton School Committee's Strategic Plan, finalized in April 2022, outlines the goal to "provide all students with highly personalized, developmentally appropriate, emotionally safe and equitably balanced daily learning experiences designed to ensure each student becomes a productive, caring, and contributing member of society and can achieve his/her/their post-secondary goals."



This plan identified three strategic pillars - **Personalized Learning, Safe and Supportive Schools, and Equity in Learning** - that are foundational to the student learning experience.

Over the course of the last six months, we have engaged in an in-depth analysis of our outcomes and operations to better understand where we are collectively as a district, and what our disaggregated individual student performance reveals about our systems, our culture, and our work to ensure that every student in MPS is thriving. The review process included a longitudinal analysis of student academic performance data, college/career readiness data, curricular documents, survey of current practices, conversations with students, staff, and parents, and other qualitative data relative to student services.

The inquiry clearly revealed a strong foundation for academic excellence. Reviewing student outcomes on standardized state and local assessments, Milton students continue to outperform the state in all subjects and grade levels on statewide assessments. Such performance is attributable to a strong and committed faculty of educators, staff, and administrators. At the same time, if our goal is to see every student reach their full potential, we must address the lack of systems and structures in MPS which make it challenging to move beyond our current reality. In the absence of a systemic response to teaching and learning, we will be unable to close the opportunity gap and ensure that every student in MPS finds success both during their education here and in their lives beyond graduation.



This section provides an overview of the district's current performance, strengths and opportunities for improvement resulting from our analysis, and concludes with a set of implementation considerations for the next phase of this work.

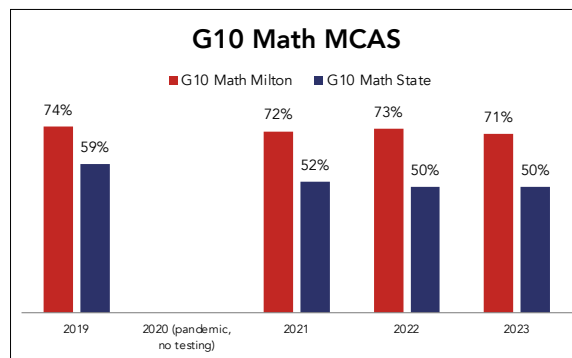
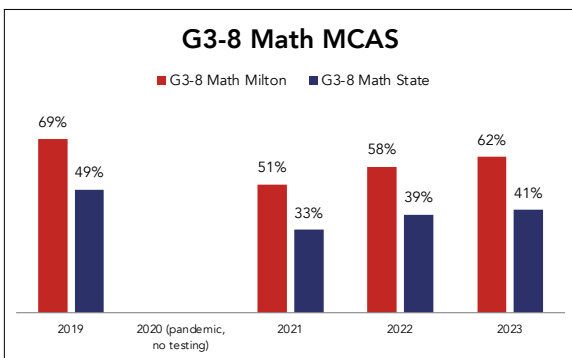
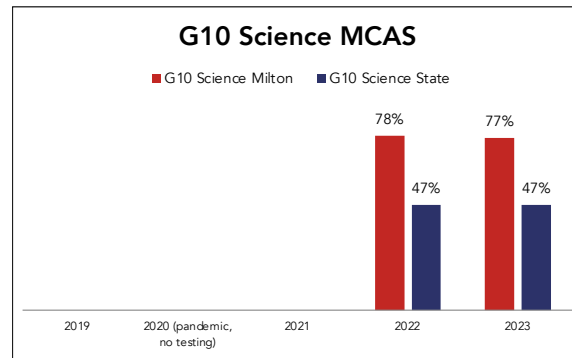
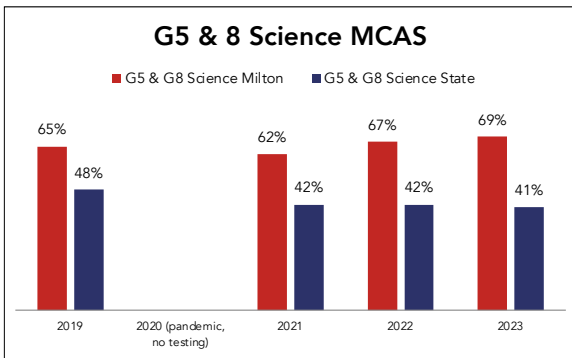
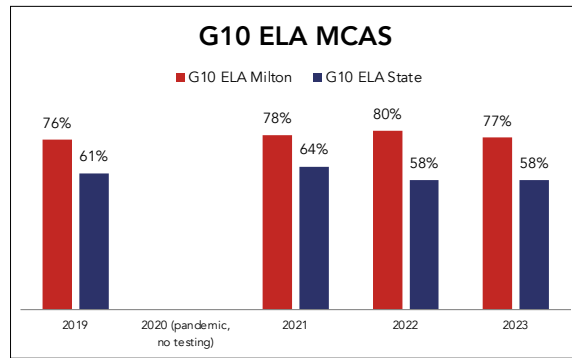
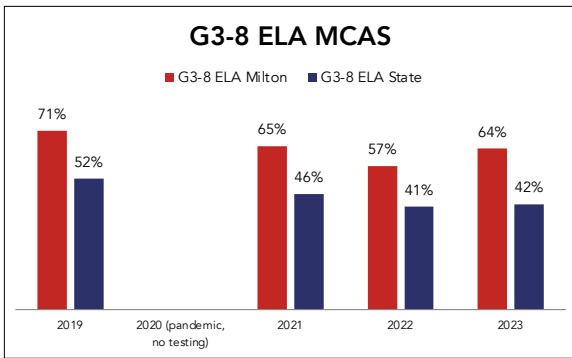
Analysis

ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Districts across the nation have struggled to address the unfinished learning opportunities created by the COVID-19 pandemic. For us, spring 2023 MCAS results and School and District Performance Summary Dashboards from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) indicate recovery from the pandemic, but significant gaps remain to return to 2019 levels. Milton continues to outperform the state average in all subjects and grade levels and is making greater recovery gains as well.

All Milton Schools have met, exceeded, or made substantial progress on the accountability targets set by DESE. Accountability targets include measures such as MCAS achievements, growth, attendance, high school graduation rates, and advanced coursework. Areas for growth include academic gaps between our priority student groups and peers along with the pronounced impact of the pandemic on these student groups.

These graphs show the percentage of students in Milton versus the state **who met or exceeded expectations on the MCAS over the past five years:**

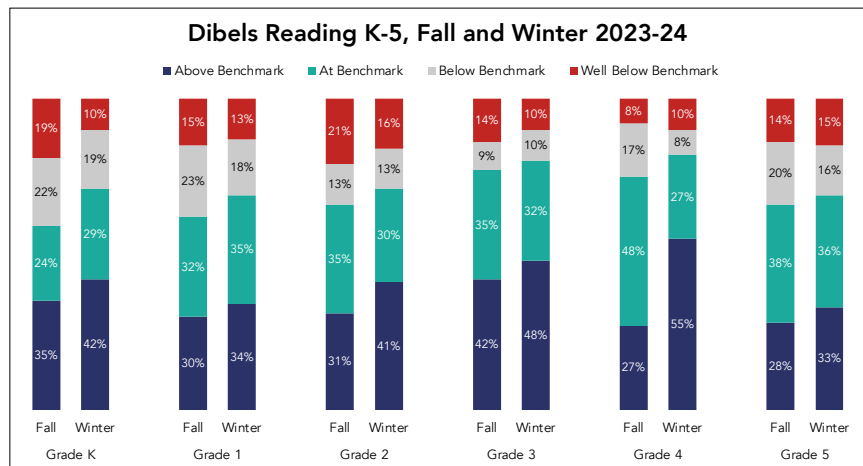


The following table shows the performance change in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the MCAS between 2019 and 2023 for all student groups. We can see that the “All Students” average performance was negatively impacted by the pandemic and is still in recovery mode in ELA and Math for grades 3-8; grade 10 students fared much better where ELA actually gained 1% since 2019 and Math is only 3% behind 2019. (Note that Grade 10 Science was still using the legacy MCAS testing in 2019, so there is no comparable performance in 2023 with the new testing.) However, the recovery rates of historically marginalized student groups lag behind the “All Students” average in many cases, and even lag behind the state’s rates of recovery for those same groups. Keeping in mind that there are already gaps in performance to begin with in 2019, these results are pointing to an urgent need to rebuild our systems with a keen focus on equity.

Subgroups - % Change in Performance between 2019 and 2023	G3-8 ELA		G3-8 Math		G5 & G8 Science		G10 ELA		G10 Math	
	MPS	State	MPS	State	MPS	State	MPS	State	MPS	State
Students w/ disabilities	-1	-4	2	-3	9	-2	21	0	19	-3
EL and former EL	-19	-12	-6	-10	-3	-4	n/a	-2	n/a	-9
Low Income	-12	-10	-10	-8	21	-4	15	-1	-5	-7
African Am/Black	-9	-7	-8	-6	6	-3	-3	5	-3	-8
Asian	-14	-8	-10	-5	-2	-2	2	3	-25	-3
Hispanic/Latino	-15	-11	-10	-9	4	-5	6	0	-4	-9
Multi-Race	-5	-7	-7	-5	4	-2	n/a	-3	n/a	-7
White	-7	-8	-8	-7	4	-6	1	-3	-3	-6
All Students	-7	-10	-7	-9	4	-6	1	-3	-3	-8

Note: Red indicates areas where Milton is lagging behind the state’s rate of recovery. Green indicates areas where there are increases from 2019 performance.

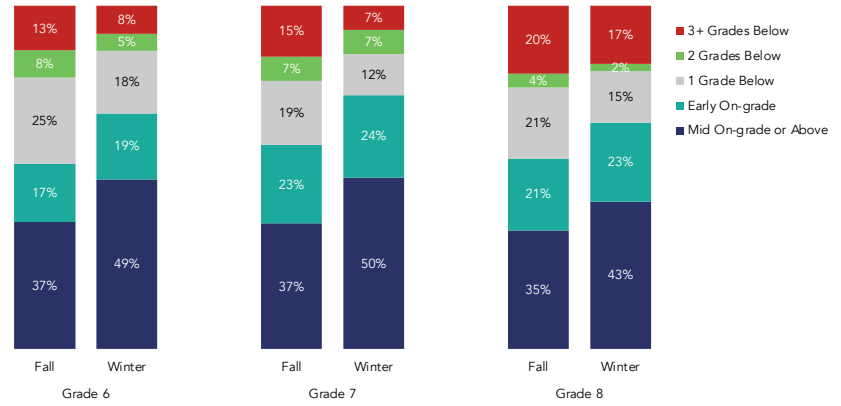
In addition to state testing data, the district also uses screening tools to assess every elementary and middle school student’s reading and math proficiency throughout the school year. This fall, the district adopted a new elementary literacy screener called DIBELS 8th and a new reading diagnostic assessment at Pierce called iReady Reading (we have used iReady Math to collect math data in grades K-8 since Winter 2021).



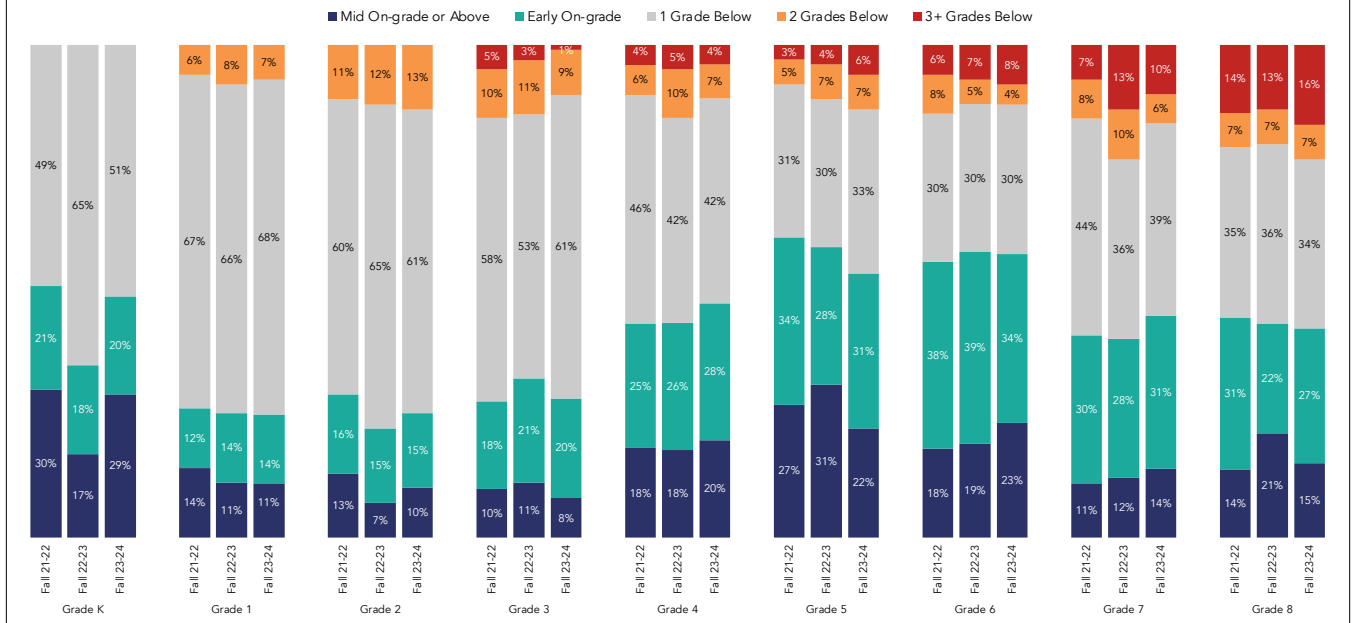
Similar to what we saw with Lexia Rapid, our previous literacy screener, DIBELS and iReady Reading are showing movement out of the below or well below benchmarks in all grades with accompanying growth in, on, and above benchmarks. Through grade level meetings, teaching targets have been identified and planned for using the more detailed reports in DIBELS and iReady. In grades K-5, no more than 31% of students are below or well below benchmarks as measured by DIBELS.

For iReady Math in grades K-8, data over the past three years show a consistent pattern of achievement where we see strong growth between the fall and the spring cycle, especially at the elementary level. At the middle school level, we still see growth overall, but we also see about 10 percent of students falling into the “3+ years below” category by 8th grade.

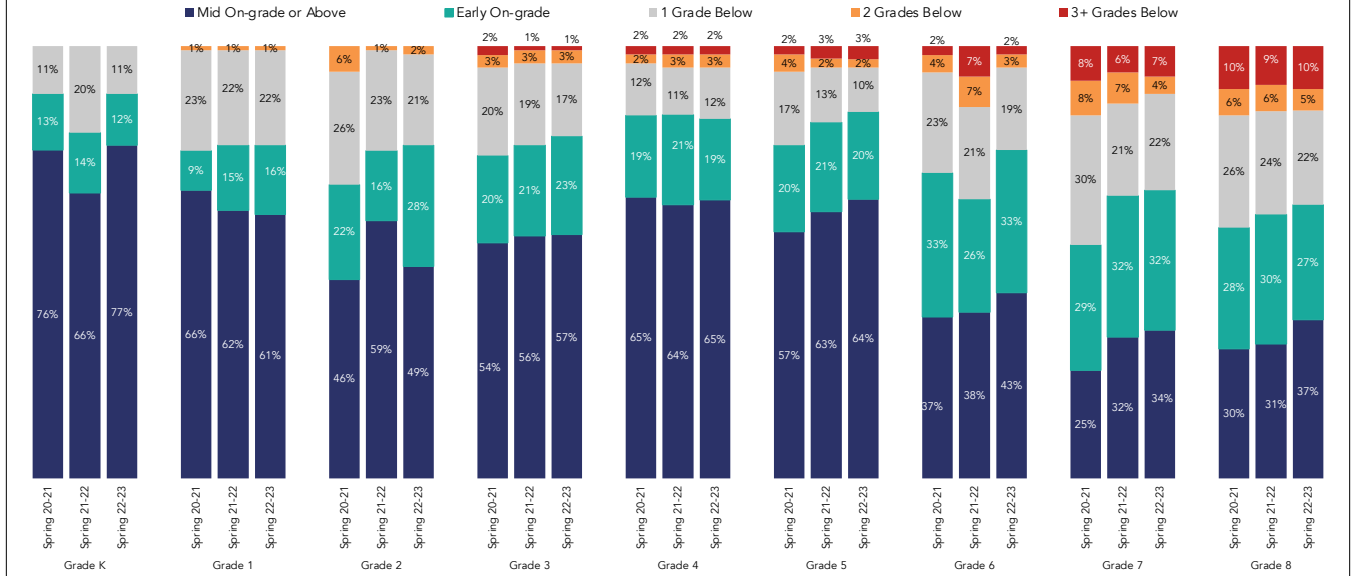
iReady Reading 6-8, Fall and Winter 2023-24



iReady Math K-8, Fall 2021-22 to Fall 2023-24



iReady Math K-8, Spring 2020-21 to Spring 2022-23

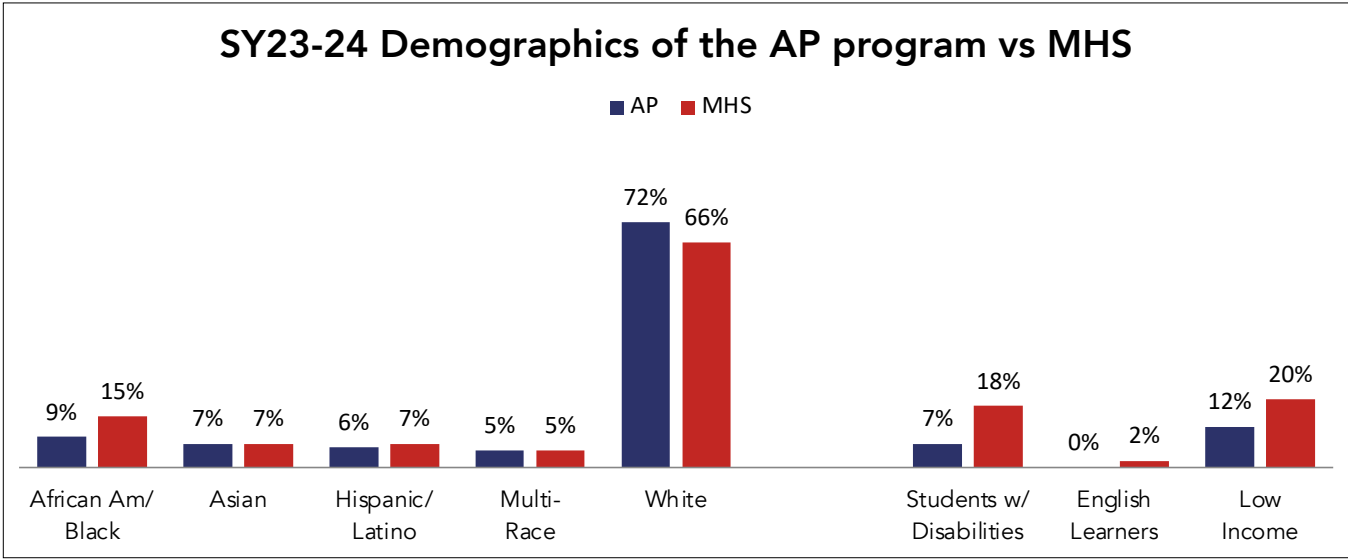


For our French Immersion students in grades 1 and 2, the district has partnered with Acadience Learning this year to implement IDAPEL, a French language early literacy screener that mirrors DIBELS. IDAPEL is a series of French language formative measures designed to assess early literacy skills. IDAPEL assesses the fundamental early reading skills of phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, accuracy and fluency with connected text, and text comprehension. As a diagnostic tool, IDAPEL measures will help benchmark student progress and facilitate the early identification of students who may be at risk of insufficient reading gain. Although preliminary benchmarks have been established for native French speakers, Acadience Learning continues to analyze data from their partnering French Immersion programs such as Milton to establish the most appropriate expectations for immersion students. The French Immersion team will continue to work with IDAPEL in its early release phase and use other data such as GB+ for grades 1 through 5 to monitor the reading progress and comprehension of our French Immersion learners.

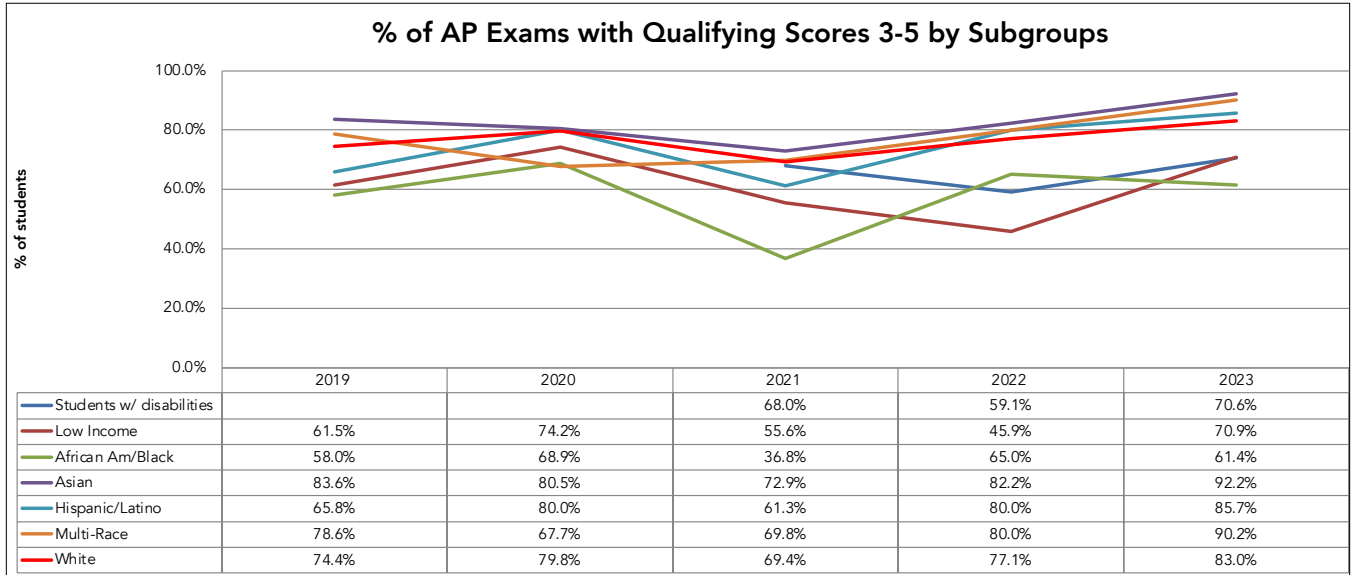
At the high school level, we reviewed data from the Advanced Placement program, Honors courses, graduation and college enrollment rates to understand where our students stand in terms of college and career readiness.

Reviewing AP enrollment for the past five years shows that approximately 350 students participated each year with about 750 exams taken each year. Approximately 80% of all AP students scored 3+. Currently, Milton High School offers 24 Advanced Placement courses and administered 22 subject exams to 371 students last year. Milton High School was recognized by the College Board-AP Honor Roll as a school that does work to welcome more students into AP courses and support them on the path to post secondary success, evidence of MPS’ commitment to equitable access. While the high school has open enrollment for Advanced Placement, our participation and performance data indicate gaps in our priority subgroups.

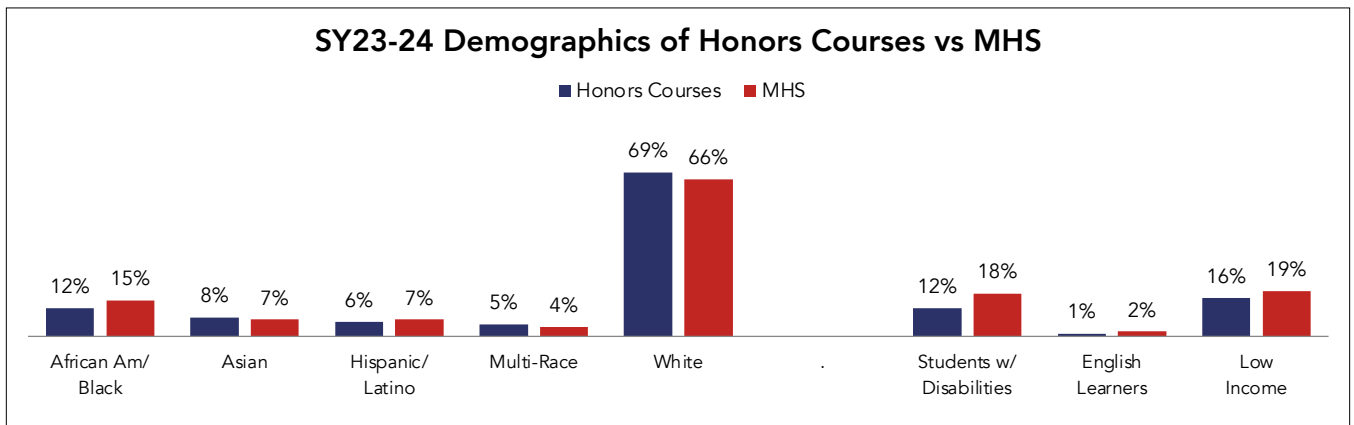
Although there is a small group of Grade 10 students who enroll in AP courses annually, the bulk of participants (85-90%) in AP courses are Grade 11 and 12 students. The following graph shows the composition of the AP program as compared to that of Milton High School for Grades 10-12. There are participation gaps in some of our priority student groups, namely African American/Black students, students from low-income families, and students with disabilities. These gaps have been persistent for many years.



The graph below looks at the performance of different student groups over the last five years by examining the percentage of exams that earned qualifying scores between 3 and 5. A qualifying score means a student is qualified to receive college credit for that course or subject, although colleges make their own decisions about what scores they will accept for credit or placement. Clearly, we see that even when students from our priority student groups participate in AP courses, they are not experiencing the same rate of success as their peers.

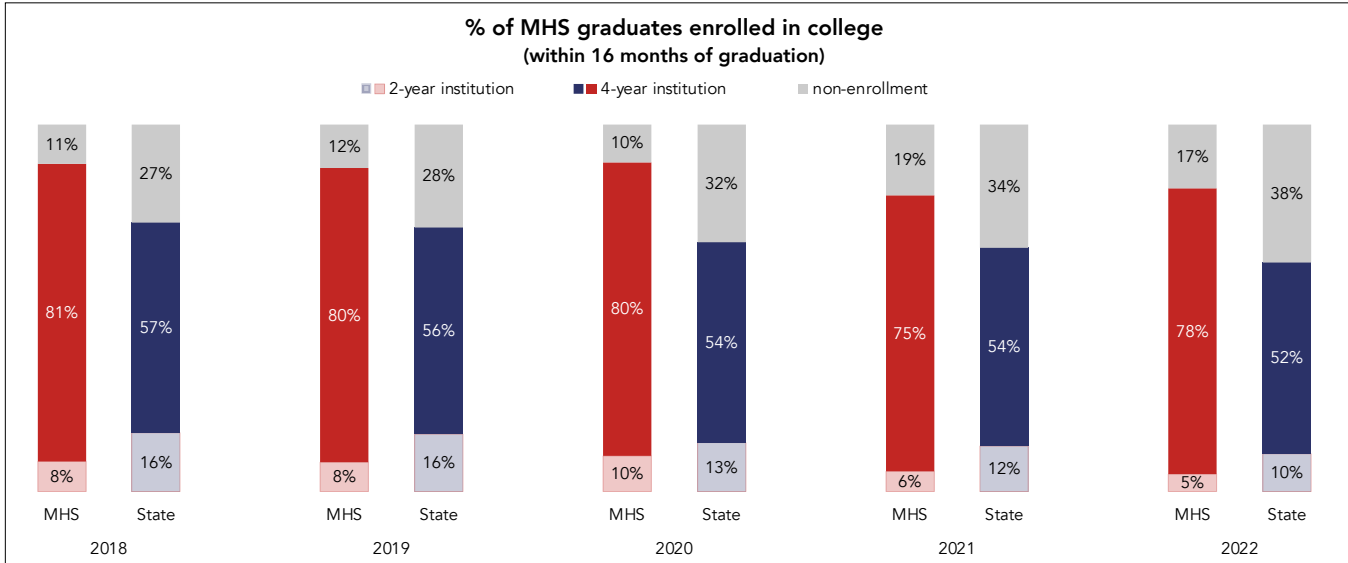


Honors course enrollment over the past five years has remained fairly consistent, with approximately 80% of the student body participating in at least one honors course each year. The demographic composition of students taking Honors courses is fairly aligned with the demographic composition of Milton High School. As can be seen in the current year's data, African American/Black students have a 3% gap; students with disabilities have a 6% gap; and low income students have a 3% gap. These numbers are an improvement over the same gaps five years ago which were 6%, 9%, and 6% respectively.

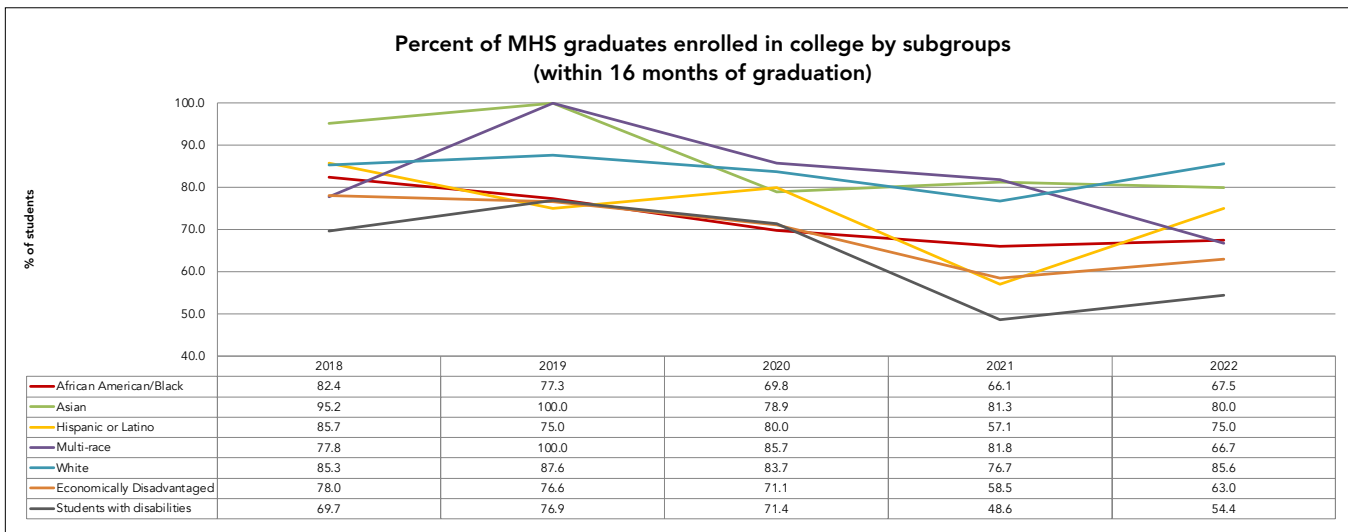


College and career readiness indicators are strong: over 94% of Milton High School students graduate each year. As of 2022, the four year graduation rate is 95%. Results from an alumni survey from December 2022 indicated that alumni felt that their education in the Milton Public Schools prepared them for attending a four-year college. Over 75% of respondents attended a four year college/university while the other 25% either took a gap year, entered the workforce, enrolled in the military, attended a vocational training program, or a two-year college.

Data from DESE and National Student Clearinghouse, a nonprofit education organization in charge of a nationwide database of private and public colleges in the United States, show the college enrollment trends for Milton (in red) and the state (in blue) in the graph below. It is clear that Milton’s outcomes surpass those of the state in that more of our graduates enrolled in college after graduating high school. These outcomes are not surprising given that Milton also exceeds the state on many metrics: MCAS performance, AP performance, SAT performance, attendance, and others.



However, when Milton’s data is broken down by subgroups for any metric, we still see the disparities in outcomes between historically marginalized subgroups and their peers. This should tell us that the issues of academic gaps are systemic in nature, and that solving any one issue in isolation - whether it be ELA, Math, Special Education, AP participation, or anything else - will not necessarily equalize outcomes for all students. We need to identify systemic levers that will change practice and provide opportunities for success for all students.



Analysis (continued)

ACADEMIC SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES

A strong system of teaching and learning is the core of academic excellence. This system should be aligned to best practice in education, should be clearly articulated across all schools in the district, and should connect professionals together to maximize expertise, collaboration, and development to most effectively respond to individual student needs. This system should be porous in nature, providing direction and clarity around content and pedagogical methodologies while also allowing for coherent input from stakeholders to shape and improve the system over time. An effective instructional framework provides clarity on instructional objectives and structures to support continued growth and evaluation of teaching strategies, assessment measures, and student experience. Considerable input during this entry plan phase has focused on the absence of some of these structures at key levels of our organization.

Schools that are more collaborative and connected have been shown to have stronger student academic outcomes.

In order to realize our academic objectives, analyzing how these structures exist to support staff in aligning and engaging impactful instructional approaches is critical. Currently, secondary teachers have department meetings and collaborative time within their schedules on a weekly rotation. At the elementary level, teachers have common planning time every other week, typically during their lunch block due to scheduling challenges and availability of specialists. Further review of elementary schedules and staffing may yield key opportunities for increased teacher collaboration. Creating opportunities for thematic interdisciplinary connections and identifying a structure to support the development of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is essential in creating an environment of belonging for all students.

Barriers exist that impede the ability to support teachers with curriculum implementation and reflection. Inconsistent communication and planning around professional learning schedules, limited common planning time at the building level, a lack of a shared instructional vision, and absence of schedules that enable learning blocks to support student learning and tiered intervention are all areas of needed growth within MPS. Curriculum reviews have been reactionary to numerous factors rather than proactive to support shifts in teaching practices. Grants, state reviews, and perfunctory requirements have driven this work rather than systematic and continued reflection on teacher practice and student outcomes.



CURRICULUM

A guaranteed and viable curriculum is the foundation of academic excellence. This means that all students have time and access to rigorous content and teachers have adequate time to teach all necessary standards. The district curriculum is strongly aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework which provides “teachers, students and families with clear and shared expectations for what all students should know and be able to do at the end of each year.” In addition, these learning standards represent a commitment to an equitable education for all students and access to the same academic content. While foundational work has been completed, some of which has been rigorous and clinical, gaps exist in the establishment of a cohesive and coherent curricular framework. Siloed curricular development not connected to systemic frameworks, inconsistent program evaluation, and initiative fatigue are all areas that need to be addressed.

ELA

The district’s English Language Arts and Literacy curriculum includes National Geographic’s Reach For Reading in grades K-5, Amplify ELA in grades 6-8, and a blended curriculum of traditional texts with investigations of contemporary literature and non-fiction at the high school level. Our literacy curriculum and instruction contribute to a large percentage of students meeting/exceeding expectations on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). Each year, the district carefully reviews MCAS results and makes necessary adjustments to the curriculum, content, pacing, and resources. This year, members from all grade levels K-8 are a part of the Literacy Leadership Team working to review curriculum, assessment, and vertical articulation. Members of the curriculum review team are using the Massachusetts CURATE rubric to determine whether gaps in the current K-5 Reach for Reading curriculum need to be addressed.

MATH

In recent years, new rigorous and aligned math curricula have been adopted and implemented to address grade level content and promote effective and equitable instructional practices. For elementary, Bridges in Mathematics (Pre-K and K) and Into Math (grades 1-5) were implemented in Fall 2022. At the secondary level, nearly all math instruction is now rooted in versions of the top-rated Illustrative Mathematics curriculum. In the immediate aftermath of school closure due to the pandemic, the paper-based version of Illustrative Mathematics, which had previously been adopted at Pierce, was replaced by the technology-enhanced Desmos Classroom version, which has remained in use as the core curriculum program to date. At MHS, the Illustrative Mathematics curriculum has been recently adopted and implemented in all core 9th (Integrated Math I), 10th (Integrated Math II), and 11th (Algebra 2) grade math courses.

SCIENCE

FOSS Next Generation has been in place in grades K-8 science since 2015 with regular review and adjustment from teacher work groups. At the high school, students complete three years of science covering topics across biological, chemical, and physical sciences, along with one MCAS exam as graduation requirements. Over 70% of students in grades 5, 8, and 10 met or exceeded expectations on the Science MCAS in 2023.

The district is currently in year two of a three-year plan to adopt Project Lead the Way (PLTW), a project-based curriculum that integrates science, technology and engineering as the STEM curriculum for Grades 1-5.



The implementation of PLTW is being led by building-based educational technology specialists, a new model that we hope will provide the necessary support for teachers and create longitudinal and horizontal consistencies across schools in STEM. Further adjustments in expectations for Science and STEM instruction at the elementary level in both the English Innovation and French Immersion programs would likely lead to improved student performance.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Our Social Studies curriculum is strongly aligned with the state standards. Elementary Social Studies focuses on the themes of civics, geography, history and economics with a primary focus on people, places, culture and community. At the secondary level our middle school students study geography and classical civilizations in the 6th and 7th grade, with newly developed units on India, Africa and the Silk Road. Our 8th grade students study civics, with a focus on the role of the citizen in a democratic society at the local, state and federal levels of government. Our high school students study Modern World Cultures and US History, along with nine electives, including five AP offerings.

The future work for Social Studies will be on defining a throughline, K-12, that focuses on investigative history units that stress content, skills, and the role of our students within their community, communicating clear expectations for time on learning at the elementary level, a focus on common writing parameters and critical thinking strategies at all grade levels and preparation for the pending MCAS Civics exam for 8th grade students.

ENGLISH INNOVATION AND FRENCH IMMERSION

There are two tracks that make up the elementary curriculum: English Innovation and French Immersion. The French Immersion program offers students the opportunity to fully integrate themselves into the French language in first and second grade using the Gafi curriculum alongside a phonics program *Français Facile* and an online digital platform *Lalilo*. In third through fourth grade, students participate in their studies with half of their classes in French (French Language Arts, Science and Social Studies) and half in English and in fifth grade students spend 30% of their day in French Immersion (FLA and Social Studies). In the English Innovation Pathway Program, students take Spanish as a specialty class 30 minutes a week in grades 1-2 and 45 minutes twice a week in Grades 3-5. English Innovation students also have additional Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) classes throughout their elementary experience. Development of a vision for the English Innovation Pathway and a cohesive plan is ongoing.



Assessment

A comprehensive assessment strategy should be dynamic and include a combination of formative, interim, and summative assessments. Ongoing assessment and other student-level data are essential elements of personalized learning, and must play a key role in collaborative time with educators, building leaders, and curriculum coordinators/directors to achieve academic excellence. Assessment data assists in regularly evaluating the quality of educational programming and drives lesson and unit planning in the classroom based on the needs of the students in the classroom. Screeners provide data that is easily aggregated for useful and efficient analysis that can be compared over time. Using screener data in addition to classwork and curriculum-based assessments creates a strong learner profile around which one can build a robust curriculum that is differentiated for all students.

In Milton, assessment of student learning is an ongoing part of professional practice. Teachers use a variety of means to evaluate student progress, including classwork, homework, projects, exit tickets, quizzes, group work, unit assessments, diagnostic screeners, and more. Each type of assessment gives teachers a different perspective into what students know and can do. Teachers use these different means of assessments in their classrooms, but there is no district-wide system for conducting or analyzing assessments together.

The current state of assessment within the district reveals a gap in coherence and consistency. While some content areas have access to a diagnostic common assessment administered to all students, such as ELA and Math in grades K-8, others do not. Common assessments (and a system to collect the data) provide a foundation from which to analyze data in the aggregate to shed light on trends and patterns across the whole student population. A common assessment framework fosters collaboration among teachers, facilitating the sharing of best practices and insights derived from collective data analysis. It fosters a culture of data-driven decision making aimed at optimizing student learning.

While Milton does not yet have common assessments for every content area at every grade level, there have been efforts to build out assessments as needed. For instance, our science team at the middle school has created many common assessments given as a team to glean information about student learning. High school content teams also have unit tests, midterms and final exams that are often common. The district's challenge is to help content teams identify and create a few key assessments to capture on the same platform, so that teacher teams can easily pull data together to analyze for instructional improvements.

Implementing common assessments is just one part of the equation; **equally important is building educators' capacity to analyze data collaboratively and derive actionable insights.**

Beyond merely collecting assessment data, fostering a culture of data analysis empowers educators to identify patterns in student learning needs and areas for instructional improvements as a team. Last year, the district engaged in professional development on data cycle analysis with building-based administrators to structure how leaders take an active role in analyzing and facilitating teacher conversations around data. This is an area that requires further development.



Review of the district’s K-8 interim assessments demonstrates fairly consistent longitudinal performance for students in mathematics and reading. These two assessments are used to identify students for further support from the classroom teacher and from interventionists. Areas for growth include academic gaps between our priority subgroups and peers along with the pronounced impact of the pandemic on these subgroups.

Currently, assessment data is typically analyzed within each classroom team or department, but not with an established multi-disciplinary team. Additionally, an assessment of the progress monitoring tools used at the high school will be a helpful data point to drive a more structured process to engage the tiered systems of supports. An assessment inventory was recently completed which includes all subjects and grades. While there is variation between the purpose, development, and administration of these assessments, a constant was the inconsistent storage of assessment results, when/how results are reviewed, the ability to view results at the district, school, grade, and classroom level, as well as ability to share reports with families.

With the sunseting of Lexia Rapid, the district has adopted the mClass/ DIBELS 8 as the literacy screener in grades K-5 and iReady Reading in grades 6-8. These tools were selected after a review due to the ease of administration, ability to access aggregated/ disaggregated data, range of skills assessed, and compliance with current dyslexia legislation. While only two administrations have been completed, the data is being used for analysis at the district, building, and class level to determine Tier 2 supports as well as evaluate Tier 1 curriculum.

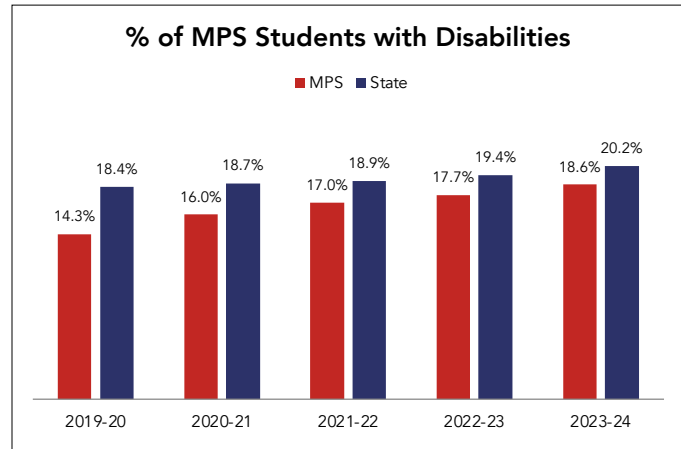
In Winter 2021, the district piloted iReady Math at the elementary and middle school levels in order to assess student performance, especially during the period of recovery immediately following the pandemic. iReady is a holistic, computer-adaptive diagnostic assessment that provides teachers with data about each student’s math proficiency and opportunities for growth relative to grade level expectations. It also provides a roadmap of sequential digital lessons for students to complete according to their individual diagnostic results. The results from the diagnostic, which is taken three times per year (fall, winter, and spring), are also utilized at the elementary level to help identify students for Tier 2 intervention services.



Student Access and Support

The diversity of student needs requires a systemic and thoughtful instructional framework from which to address gaps, accelerate learning, and provide support. It has been well established that a Multi Tiered System of Support is the foundation from which diverse student learning needs can be met. This includes a strong data collection system, and alignment among our District Curriculum Accommodation Plan, the Student Support Team (SST) process, and Multi Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

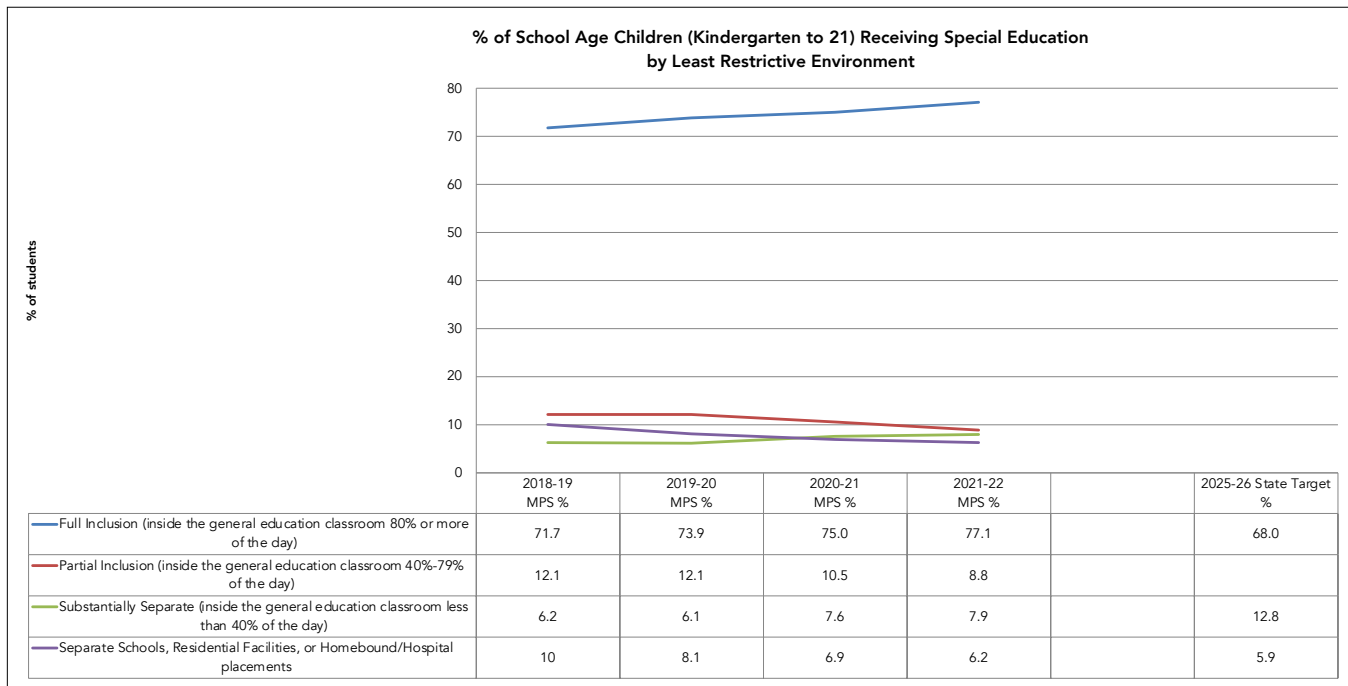
To the right is a graph outlining our percentage of students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP):



*For 2019 and 2020, no reportable data for fewer than ten students.

Total enrollment for students on IEP or 504 plans has consistently increased since before the COVID-19 pandemic. The increase in enrollment highlights the need for a consistent MTSS process, including clear entry and exit criteria for both Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention, as well as updating the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan and the Student Support and Behavioral Health Team process.

The graph below shows the percentage of Milton students, Kindergarten to age 21, receiving special education services in different learning environments over the most recent four years. Milton is exceeding the state's target percentage for academic year 2025-26 for full inclusion, in addition to having fewer students placed in substantially separate settings. However, further development in programming is required to address out of district placement and the unique needs of each student in Milton.



*No State target for Partial Inclusion

An MPS Special Education Program Review was completed in the spring of 2023. The review outlined areas of strength, as well as highlighting concerns focused on the structure of special education programs. While there are established programs across the district, the review cited lack of program entry and exit criteria, articulated performance indicators, and clarity within the greater structure of student services. Current programs operated within the district support students with autism spectrum disorders, social-emotional disabilities, language based disabilities, and neurological disabilities.

The Review cited other focus areas, including consistency in the team chair role at each building and the structural alignment of special education programming. These findings point to systems work to create a cohesive structure that supports staff in meeting the needs of all students, and leverages the considerable pedagogical capacity and commitment of our staff.

There are currently 65 students who are placed out of district at a residential-educational program, a private therapeutic day school, or a collaborative program. Nine students are placed in the residential-educational program, 31 in a therapeutic day school, and 25 in a collaborative educational placement. In order to serve more of our students within the district, further analysis needs to take place to determine MPS program design, assessment and evaluation. This includes the opportunity to restructure service delivery to meet the needs of more students.

MPS employs a co-teaching model for students on IEPs across all levels. Co-teaching, when done with fidelity, can be a less restrictive approach to teaching students who have disabilities in reading, writing, and/or math. The current co-teaching model is accessible at two elementary schools, the middle school, and the high school. Access to co-teaching is discussed through the IEP Team process and is a service identified within the service delivery of the IEP. The Special Education Program Review cited ambiguity of entry and exit criteria as well as access to this support across the district as areas of growth to address in structural improvement.

Early childhood education is a critical component of academic excellence, especially for our students with the greatest needs. The district’s preschool program includes eight total classrooms, three substantially separate, four integrated half-day classrooms, and one classroom for typically developing peers who need a full-day preschool to build school readiness skills. In addition to classroom teachers and educational assistants, the preschool program also has related service providers (e.g. speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists) and academic interventionists to support students who have gaps in learning and are not identified as having a disability. The preschool programs are currently housed at Cunningham Elementary school (six classrooms) and Tucker elementary school (two classrooms). The two major challenges confronted in the

DISABILITIES FALL INTO THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES

Autism Spectrum Disorder (I,II,III)	16
Intellectual Disability	4
Emotional Disability	18
Health Disability	4
Communication	4
Multiple Disabilities	3
Neurological	10
Specific Learning Disability	6



preschool programs are having the appropriate amount of peers available for the integrated classrooms in order to meet the DESE requirements, and recruiting and maintaining trained staff, specifically related to ABA therapy.

Tiered intervention, which provides a systemic approach to additional intensity of instructional support across the curriculum, involves many layers. All schools have access to an inclusion specialist, who provides support to teachers and students as well as leads the Student Support Team (SST) process. The purpose of the SST process is to identify students who may be struggling academically. Additionally, each school has a Behavioral Health Support Team which focuses on student social and emotional support, and interventionists who work both in the classroom and in individual and small group settings to provide support.

Overall, there is a need for further focus on intervention consistency across MPS schools, at all tiers. This systemic approach needs to include a high-level coherent vision of how the complex and diverse learning needs of students can be addressed through a thorough analysis of MTSS. This includes program structure, district-wide fidelity, and consistency in design and implementation.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development (PD) is critical to ensuring all teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to create rigorous, joyful, and culturally sustaining classroom environments that meet the individualized needs of all students. Effective professional development must be ongoing, personalized, practical, and ultimately focused on ensuring success for all students. While there have been improvements in the structure of professional development, including developing a website to organize the competing needs of building administrators, department directors, and the collaboration with colleagues, there continue to be ongoing challenges with the coordination of professional development.

Feedback from educators has been to provide improved opportunities for teacher collaboration throughout the year and personalized professional learning opportunities. Finding time for professional learning has been challenging due to limited professional development days, mismatched school dismissal times, and daily school schedules that limit opportunities for teacher collaboration. Limited time also provides challenges with competing priorities between curriculum needs, building-based needs, collaboration, and building social-emotional learning needs.

External providers have worked with the district on professional development through formal presentations, observations, and in-the-moment coaching. While these opportunities have provided expertise and best practice, they have not led to a more coherent and impactful learning framework. Furthermore, they have not led to the establishment of systems that sustain continued growth and improvement.

An analysis of the development and procurement of professional development points to the need to engage more deeply with staff to build a vision together of what kinds of learning best meet the needs of MPS educators. Staff should be leaders in shaping the direction of the district, and in engaging in professional development that furthers their craft.



FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Milton consistently outperforms most districts in the state and has outpaced many districts in addressing unfinished learning opportunities created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the commitment and capacity of our leaders, teachers, and staff are significant. Both create a strong foundation for academic success. In our continuing efforts to achieve academic excellence the district must establish systems and structure to support our leaders, teachers, and staff in ensuring that every student thrives. Based on our analysis, the following are implementation considerations that will drive our work in this area:

- Create a district-wide assessment system, establish effective use of a common data system, and adopt a shared vision of how data is used to inform instruction, including common practices and protocols. Train staff in the analysis of interpreting data and using it to drive instruction and support for all students.
- Establish data cycles where teams can work collaboratively to review common assessments and other relevant data to address a student learning issue and a corresponding teaching problem of practice. Map these cycles onto existing PD time or common planning time to provide continuity for the collaborative process.
- Develop a cohesive and articulated instructional framework that operationalizes shared beliefs and vision of highly effective teaching and learning. Align curriculum across all schools.
- Establish an MTSS structure that is grounded in tiered intervention, differentiation, and consistent program evaluation to respond to individual and group learning needs. Create systems that are clear, understandable, and efficacious and guide students, staff, and parents to higher collaboration and connectedness.
- Establish opportunities for collaboration within systems that support actionable outcomes. Review systems and structures for collaboration within and across campuses. Build structures that allow multi-disciplinary teams of staff and administration to organize and analyze data and lead academic conversation.
- Evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of a uniform schedule at the elementary level, including the opportunities it would create for collaboration across campuses and the creation of an equitable learning environment.
- Develop professional development to build systems, grow capacity, and achieve objectives of MPS Strategic Plan. Ensure alignment of professional development to action steps outlined in the implementation plan to create meaningful learning for all staff.



Climate, Culture, and Wellbeing

Executive Summary

Fostering a positive climate, cultivating an inclusive and collaborative culture focused community, and attending to the wellbeing of students and staff plays a critical role in achieving academic excellence. To create a positive climate, a district must ensure transparency, develop systems and structures that promote open communication, and establish a supportive environment for learning and development for students, teachers, and leaders. Cultivating a culture of collaboration and inclusivity involves systematically integrating efforts to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging throughout operations, systems and structures, and creates an environment that promotes growth and learning. Attending to wellbeing requires programs to meet the holistic needs of staff and students. In such a system, a district's efforts not only promote academic success but meet the comprehensive needs of every student.



Establishing a strong climate and culture in education is increasingly important given the connection of students' social-emotional health and academic outcomes. Assessment data reviewed includes a district-wide social-emotional screener, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) VOCAL survey, the Quality Review conducted by Cambridge Education in 2021, and the Special Education Program Review in 2023.

This section provides an overview of the district's current performance, strengths, and opportunities for improvement resulting from our analysis, and concludes with a set of implementation considerations for the next phase of this work. Creating a structure for ongoing collection, organization, and analysis of data by key stakeholders is an essential part of the work in ensuring equitable access to curriculum and a positive work environment for staff. This work is nascent.

Analysis

ASSESSMENT

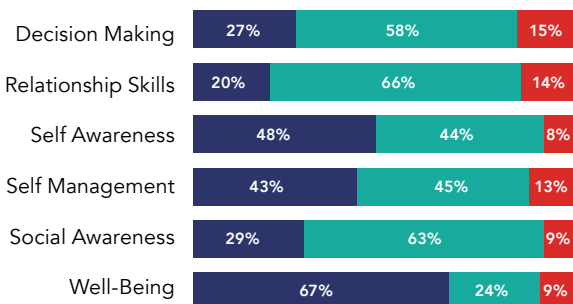
To establish a data-driven approach, assessment of climate and culture began in 2018. All six schools completed the Safe and Supportive Schools Self-Assessment and Action Planning Cycle through DESE. This was the beginning of Milton's efforts to intentionally collect data to gain insight into the climate, culture and wellbeing across the district. The district then partnered with Intellispark in 2021 to begin assessing students' self reported social-emotional competencies in five core areas: responsible decision making, relationship skills, self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness.

The collection of this data supports school- and district-based intervention. Data collected was organized into domains and not broken down into subgroups; therefore it is unclear whether students in marginalized groups have the same feelings of their own strengths and challenges within these domains.

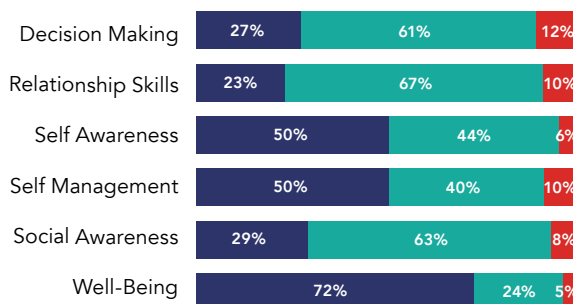
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS IN LEVEL OF SPECIFIED COMPETENCY

■ High level ■ Mid level ■ Low level

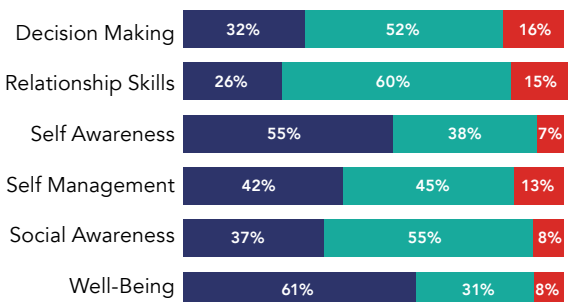
COLLICOT - FALL 2022



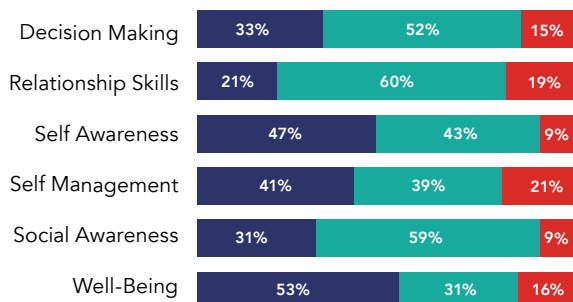
CUNNINGHAM - FALL 2022



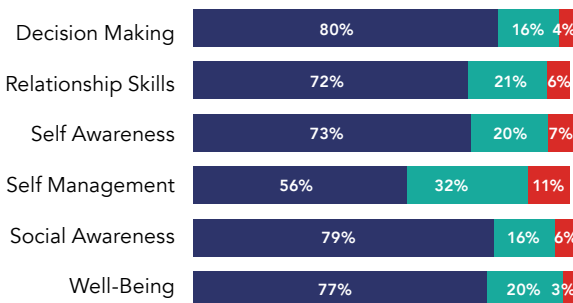
GLOVER - FALL 2022



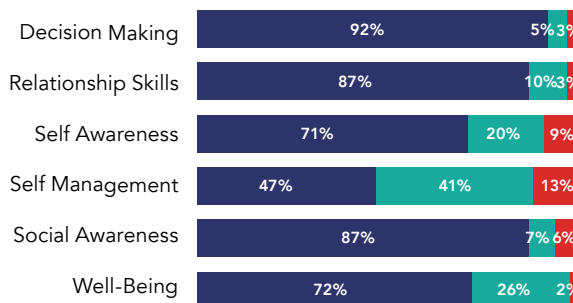
TUCKER - FALL 2022



PIERCE - FALL 2022

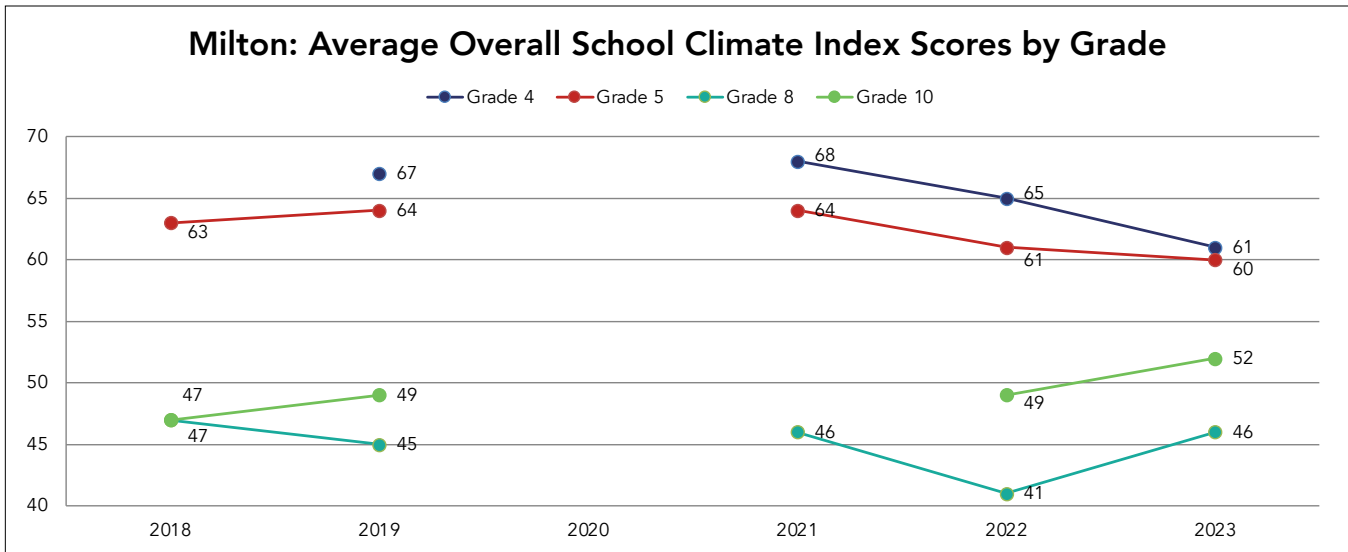


MILTON HIGH - FALL 2022



In fall of 2023, a new SEL assessment tool was adopted, which provides deeper analytical capacity, including the ability to do subgroup analysis. Further work is necessary to build a baseline and an understanding of how to make this data actionable, and what types of interventions will most effectively impact SEL outcomes.

The district also utilizes the Views of Climate and Learning (VOCAL) survey, collected for grades 4,5,8, and 10 upon completion of the MCAS by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Below are the overall school climate index scores for the four surveyed grade levels since VOCAL's launch in 2018. The school climate index score is an aggregate of the three dimensions of climate (engagement, safety, and environment). Index scores range from 1 to 99, but most scores fall between 35 and 75 in the state. The higher the score, the better the school climate is. Index scaled scores can be used to identify meaningful differences in student perceptions. According to DESE, a difference of three points is a meaningful but small difference in student perceptions. In contrast, a difference of eight points is considered a large disparity in student perceptions.



2023 School Climate Index Scores by Subgroups

2023	All Students	AfAm/BI	Asian	Hisp/Lat	White	Other (incl Multi-Race)	Female	Male	EL	Low Income	SWD
Grade 4	61	58	61	58	62	57	63	58		60	61
Grade 5	60	58	63	56	61	57	63	58	55	61	60
Grade 8	46	43	53	49	47	38	46	47		48	45
Grade 10	52	51	53	52	52		52	52		51	48

The VOCAL results indicate that on the whole, the elementary schools experience a more positive school climate than the secondary schools - a pattern that is replicated statewide. The high school fares better than the middle school, a pattern also replicated at the state level. When compared to the average “All Student” experience, there are mostly small differences among the experience of different subgroups in the district.

With the adoption of new assessments and the absence of longitudinal data, deeper analysis of the connection between the data and our building and district initiatives is imperative.



CLIMATE AND CULTURE SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES

Over the last decade, structures have been put in place to build towards a systemic approach to climate and culture. This includes the establishment of a district-wide SEL Team; SEL Leads in each building who provide site-based support; an adjustment counselor lead position; a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) team that includes the DEIB Director; a DEIB Coach; a Restorative Justice Coach and nine Equity Lead Teachers throughout the district; and a Health and Wellness committee.

Ideally, **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging** is not a standalone initiative, or a set of programs, but a way of being.

Milton strives to be a district where DEIB practices are institutionalized and integrated across all operations, practices, systems, and structures. Milton Public Schools aspires to be a community in which all community members feel a sense of belonging. Belonging is created when students and staff know that they are accepted and valued for who they are. We can communicate our acceptance of and appreciation for all people by treating them with respect, by learning about individuals, and by using text and curricula that feature and honor all identities. We aspire to be a school district that attracts diverse employees who are committed to providing all students with an equitable and excellent education.

The DEIB team has grown in size since its inception and has supported the development of more restorative disciplinary practices across the district, provided learning and professional development, and been an integral part of leading towards a culture where all feel they belong. They have worked directly with students, staff, and parents to create a positive climate, culture and sense of wellbeing. The DEIB department also includes Equity Lead Teachers in each school building. The Equity Leads assist the DEIB Coach in planning and delivering professional development opportunities for staff, serve as models of culturally responsive teaching, and lead restorative practices in their respective school buildings.

Adjustment counselors are an integral part of the SEL efforts in schools. Adjustment counselors ensure that various social-emotional classes are being taught throughout all buildings during the school year. They are available to all students, either formally through the IEP service delivery, or as needed for students without disabilities. Additionally, the SEL leads are given training throughout the year in various areas of social-emotional support, including trauma-informed care and classroom strategies.

The health and wellness of the MPS community has been a central mission of the district. Much of this health and wellness development has been structured through committee work. Recently, this has included supporting the adoption of new health curriculum standards and establishing clearly defined systems of support for all students. This representative committee is designed to be a vehicle to bring together the work of social-emotional learning across the district.

Further analysis of climate and culture systems and structures is necessary to address how resources are best leveraged and how to connect work on climate across all levels of the organization. An overview from a systems perspective reveals opportunity in designing structures from the ground up as we look at establishing the strongest climate and culture for every student in MPS.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social-emotional learning is essential in ensuring that students have an equitable and safe learning experience with their peers. Creating a strong tiered system of support for all students will provide an environment where all students have an opportunity to participate in curriculum and instruction in the least restrictive environment with their peers, while learning how to navigate their emotional needs and the social nuances occurring throughout the school day and beyond. The use of the DESE Safe and Supportive Schools Self-Assessment has been utilized to investigate social-emotional structures as a district and offers insight into structural strengths and challenges across the district.

SEL Leads and adjustment counselors have been central to the development of systems and support throughout buildings. This has included sharing understanding of students with social and emotional needs, working with

leaders to enhance safe, equitable, and supportive systems for all students, and working across the district to ensure consistency across schools.

In addition, the Student Support Team (SST) and the Behavioral Health Support Team (BHST) work to create a strong learning environment for all students. The SST and the BHST both meet weekly, one providing a focus on students who are struggling academically and the other with more of a focus on social-emotional and behavioral support for students. While each team has a distinct purpose, there is also some overlap between the work done by both teams. Further inquiry would be helpful in clearly defining goals and objectives in order to effectively meet the needs of students from a whole child perspective.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Family engagement is a critical component to achieving academic excellence for all students, creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment that promotes student wellbeing, and fostering a positive climate among teachers. We value a strong home-school connection as research shows it impacts a number of outcomes including student achievement, behavior and attendance. As is true of many areas addressed in this report, Milton has several bright spots in the area of family engagement, but lacks a systematic approach that ensures a strong link to student learning, fosters productive two-way communication, and proactively engages families and community members in decision making.

MPS has one Family Outreach Liaison who serves as a conduit between families and the district. The liaison works with administrators and school counselors and connects new and existing families to resources both within MPS and in the surrounding community. Our schools have robust parent-teacher organizations and other parent-run organizations at every level which greatly contribute to the positive culture at each school.

Determining how to engage families as partners in their student's education is of critical importance at every grade level, and needs to be intentional. In addition, the design of parent engagement structures needs to be differentiated for all families, not just those who understand educational systems and how to operate within them. This work remains in MPS as we build our implementation plan.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The district has taken critical steps in assessing students and faculty and their feelings of safety and belonging in the school community. Collecting and using data to support students' social-emotional needs, implementing foundational Tier 1 interventions, creating a behavioral health team, and identifying SEL leads at each building have been impactful. The ongoing development of climate, culture, and wellbeing of the district are incorporated into the future considerations below:

- Build consistent tiered supports for social-emotional wellbeing across the district. This includes an analysis to determine the efficacy of current programming, research of current student need, the collection of data to drive decision making, and identification of clear entry and exit criteria for tier two and three supports.
- Prioritize the ongoing capacity for building systems for data collection, organization, and analysis in the areas of social-emotional wellbeing, feelings of belonging and safety, and wellness. While identifying these areas for data collection, ensure that data is categorized by subgroups to identify achievement and opportunity gaps for marginalized groups.
- Review the organizational structures that lead and sustain climate and culture to create a system that can develop and sustain the vision we hold for social-emotional wellbeing of our students, staff, and larger community.
- Formalize the Safe and Supportive Schools assessment and identify utilization of outcome data.
- Establish partnerships with local and state agencies to leverage health and human resources for students and families.
- Determine what it means to carry equity across all aspects of our organization as a shared responsibility of every member within our learning community.

Executive Summary

The Milton Public Schools consists of six schools housed in five buildings. These buildings were updated approximately 20 years ago, and are now beginning to face increased maintenance needs. An increase in enrollments since the construction of the schools have resulted in all buildings currently exceeding their designed student capacity with no expectation of any decrease in the near future. Increasing financial needs of the system are complicated by the nature of the Town's finances which, due to the suburban nature of the Town, are heavily dependent on residential property taxes. The Town and Schools attempt to mitigate this through shared services, such as the Town's Consolidated Facilities Department and shared Human Resources and Payroll functions. The Town and Schools also collaborate on the Town's Annual Budget, both at the Administrative level and at the School Committee and Select Board level. Despite this, expanding costs outpacing revenue increases continue to challenge the ability to provide necessary services. Strong Town/School collaboration needs to continue, enhancing operational systems as well as financial and facilities planning. While the structural issues of the Town's finances are largely beyond our control, streamlining the Human Resources and Payroll systems and enhancing the Consolidated Facilities Department will create efficiencies that will partially mitigate those challenges.



Analysis

FACILITIES

The Milton Public Schools consists of four elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. Students at the high school level also have the option of enrolling in Blue Hills Regional Technical High School as well as Norfolk Agricultural High School, both of which are public schools available to Milton residents, although they are not situated in Milton and are not maintained by the Town.

The six public schools were reconstructed (Pierce Middle School, Collicot Elementary School), renovated (Cunningham Elementary School), or renovated and enlarged (Glover Elementary School, Tucker Elementary School, Milton High School) during a major building project that took place between 2001 and 2006. The resulting schools encompass approximately 700,000 square feet of space. All utilities were upgraded and replaced during that project, and solar panels were installed on all buildings.

An MPS custodial staff of approximately 26 people maintain all buildings. Maintenance is performed by the Department of Consolidated Facilities, a Town department which maintains all Town buildings.

As the buildings began to age, the School Committee contracted with Drummey, Rosane Anderson, Inc (DRA) in 2017 to create an Asset Management Plan. The plan laid out a series of four five-year plans identifying expected maintenance needs between 2019 and 2038. Estimated costs (with escalation) totaled approximately three million dollars annually with one million dollars of that being routine maintenance. The School budget averages \$300,000 per year in routine maintenance. The Consolidated Facilities Department averages \$1,200,000 per year with just over half of that (by square footage) devoted to the Schools. As a result, routine maintenance spending has kept up with the needs. Non-routine maintenance is generally funded through the Town's Capital Budget. The amount of funding varies from year to year based upon the Town's financial situation. In FY24, for instance, this budget funded just over one million dollars in maintenance. The Asset Management Study had predicted that we would need to spend approximately five million dollars in FY24, but \$2.2M of that was for a predicted high school roof replacement that

is not yet needed. The difference between the anticipated \$2.8M in spending and the actual \$1.9M allocated is due primarily to two factors: 1) ongoing maintenance extending the anticipated lifetime of some assets (such as the high school roof), and 2) changes in technology offering upgrades and replacements that were lower in cost than those anticipated in FY17. At this point in time, the Town’s commitment to maintaining the schools’ operational capacities is being fulfilled.

Looking forward, the cost of maintaining aging buildings is clearly going to increase. Enlarging the skilled staff of the Consolidated Facilities Department in order to bring more work in-house will be one way to mitigate those costs.

ENROLLMENT HISTORY

Following the construction of the new school buildings which was completed in 2006, school enrollment increased. It continued to increase until the 2019-2020 pandemic school year when many families opted either for home schooling or for attending private or parochial schools that remained fully in-person. Since then, attendance has rebounded to approximately pre-pandemic levels. In the following historical chart, the Preschool and post-grade-12 populations have been removed since those classes are for students with special needs and the enrollments are determined by the size of those populations rather than by the demographics of those populations at large.

School Year	K-5	6-8	9-12	K-12
2013-14	1,985	910	950	3,845
2014-15	2,040	916	971	3,927
2015-16	2,071	901	995	3,967
2016-17	2,115	917	982	4,014
2017-18	2,152	911	1,013	4,076
2018-19	2,177	938	1,024	4,139
2019-20	2,259	980	1,051	4,290
2020-21	2,158	954	1,112	4,224
2021-22	2,216	937	1,119	4,272
2022-23	2,177	958	1,056	4,191
2023-24	2,152	962	1,089	4,203

Five year projections from the New England School Development Council (NESDEC) suggest the following:

School Year	K-5	6-8	9-12	K-12
2023-24	2,152	962	1,089	4,203
2024-25	2,179	984	1,064	4,227
2025-26	2,152	972	1,080	4,204
2026-27	2,175	942	1,109	4,227
2027-28	2,155	955	1,087	4,197
2028-29	2,152	948	1,112	4,212

While these projections seem to indicate flat growth, another factor with the potential to increase these figures is that there are currently approximately 450 new housing units either under construction or in the planning stages within the Town. This has the potential to increase the school-age population in the Town by several hundred students.

An additional consideration is the changing demographics within these numbers. Over the last five years, the number of English Language Learners in the district has grown by 71%, from 76 in FY19 to 130 in FY24. Similarly, the number of students with special needs has grown by 32% from 632 to 832 over the same period. This requires additional support programming even if the overall student population remains constant.

While the proposed new school building project will alleviate overcrowding due to numbers of students, flexibility needs to be built into staffing systems in order to respond to the changing academic needs of our students.

BUDGET

History and Format

While the actual budget of the School Department comes from several sources which will be discussed later, the Town Meeting has voted over the years to support the schools to the extent possible. A summary of the approved budgets follows.

2014-15	\$39,357,890		2019-20	\$51,028,275
2015-16	\$40,762,601		2020-21	\$52,925,786
2016-17	\$43,621,300		2021-22	\$54,821,097
2017-18	\$47,445,550		2022-23	\$58,365,423
2018-19	\$49,628,098		2023-24	\$61,574,062

This represents a 5.1% annualized rate of increase over the period.

The budget for the Milton Public Schools follows the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) mandated chart of accounts format. Expenditures are divided into seven major categories: Policy and Administration, Instructional Leadership, Instruction, Instructional Services, Special Education, Technology, and Facilities. These categories are subdivided into several hundred subcategories, with some expenditures being disaggregated by school.

FY24 Budget	Salary	Non-Salary	Total
Policy & Administration	\$1,461,213	\$311,930	\$1,773,143
Instructional Leadership	\$4,178,027	\$159,000	\$4,337,027
Instruction	\$26,833,096	\$894,790	\$27,727,886
Instructional Services	\$4,296,184	\$863,300	\$5,159,484
Special Education	\$11,485,900	\$6,116,300	\$17,602,200
Technology	\$0	\$425,930	\$425,930
Facilities	\$2,307,742	\$2,240,650	\$4,458,392
Total	\$50,562,162	\$11,011,900	\$61,574,062

As is common for most public school districts, 82% of spending is on salaries. More than half of the remaining budget (55% of non-salary expenditures) is spent on Special Education, with out-of-district tuition being the majority of those expenditures. Another 20% of the non-salary expenditures are for Facilities (maintenance and utilities), leaving only about 25% of non-salary expenditures for instructional and administrative costs. In FY24, this amounts to about 2.6 million dollars.

REVENUE SOURCES

Revenue for the Town's Operating Budget comes primarily from three sources: Property Tax, State Aid, and Local Receipts. For FY24, Property Tax collections were budgeted at \$98M; State Aid was \$17M and Local Receipts were \$9M. Because of its lack of commercial development, property tax falls heavily on the residents, with 96.8% of collections coming from residential property tax. Roughly \$10M of the \$17M State Aid is Chapter 70 Education Aid, which has risen sharply over the past four years due to the implementation of the Student Opportunity Act. This legislation was enacted to correct historic inequities in the Education Aid formula, of which Milton was one of the communities seriously disadvantaged. There will be two more years of implementation of the Student Opportunity Act, after which time Education Aid funding will likely stabilize. Local Receipts include automobile excise taxes, building permit fees, license fees, etc., and are relatively stable from year to year. The restrictions of Proposition 2 ½, which places strict limit on the Town's ability to increase property tax collection, combined with the lack of growth in many other funding sources, have resulted in the Town periodically needing to propose so-called Operating Overrides, pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 59, section 21C.

The Town also maintains Enterprise Funds for Water, Sewer and Stormwater Management. These are supported by their own fees and are independent of the Town's operating budget.

Capital Projects are funded by Town Meeting on recommendation of the Capital Planning and Improvement Committee. The School Committee has a member representing the Schools on that committee. Revenue comes from funds certified by the Department of Revenue as Free Cash for the prior fiscal year as well as by bonding. The Town maintains a formula for Interest and Maturing Debt which determines how much bonding is available in any given year.

The School Department also receives various Federal, State and local grants. At the Federal level, these include the IDEA (Special Education) grant as well as the ESSA (Titles I-IV) grants, totaling approximately \$1.5M annually. State grants are available for various purposes but generally total less than \$200K annually. Local grants are small, rarely totaling more than \$15K.

The School Department also maintains Revolving Funds for fee-based programs such as School Lunches, Community Schools, Sports, Clubs and Activities, Field Trips, etc. They also serve to hold payments from Medicaid (\$250K annually) and Special Education Circuit Breaker (\$2.5M annually) which help to offset the Operating Budget.



TOWN CONTRIBUTIONS

The Town also provides services for the School Department outside of the School Operating Budget and Capital Budget.

Consolidated Facilities	Approximately 15 years ago, the Town created a Department of Consolidated Facilities which oversees the maintenance of all Town-owned buildings. The Director reports jointly to the Town Administrator and the Superintendent of Schools. They employ both workers and skilled craftspeople, reducing the need for departments to contract these services out.
Employee Benefits	Health Insurance, Dental Insurance and other benefits for all Town employees are handled through the Human Resources Department of the Town, which has its own budget for these expenditures. Unemployment expenses are also a separate budget within the Town.
Debt Service	All interest and maturing debt costs, whether for the Schools or other departments, are paid through a separate Town Budget.
Accounting/Treasurer	Although the School Department has a Business Office which prepares payroll, accounts payable, and other financial transactions, these are passed through the Town Accountant's and Town Treasurer's office for final processing. A portion of those budgets is considered to be an indirect contribution to the School department.
School Resource Officers	The Schools have the services of two School Resource Officers. One officer is funded by the Police Department while the School Department reimburses them for the salary of the second.
Pension/OPEB	Teacher pensions are held by the Mass Teachers Retirement System. These contributions are managed by the School Business Office. Other employees (educational assistants, custodians, food service workers, administrative assistants, etc) are part of the Town Retirement System, which has its own separate budget. The unfunded liability for other post-employment benefits for these employees is also addressed through that budget. Retired Teacher Health benefits are billed directly to the Town through the "Cherry Sheets," offsetting state aid payments.

AUDIT FINDINGS

Town Audit/Bond Rating

The Town, including the Schools, is audited annually. Recent audits have shown no adverse comments related to the Schools. The Town maintains a AAA Bond Rating.

DESE End of Year Audit

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education requires an End of Year report for each fiscal year. This is also audited annually and has had no findings for many years.

Grants Audit

The Town's auditors perform a separate audit on all procedures related to Federal and State grants. There have also been no findings on these audits.

Student Activities Audit

Student Activity Funds are audited annually, with an internal audit alternating with an external audit. The Business Office performs the internal audit and the Town's auditors are contracted to perform the external audit. Due to Covid, these have not been performed in two years and are going back on cycle in FY24.

Budget development only works with substantial cooperation from the Town Administrator and their financial staff, the Select Board, the Warrant Committee and the School Committee. Conflict with any one of these parties has historically resulted in a challenging budget process for the Town. While the Town Meeting several years ago amended its bylaws to create a so-called "Strong Town Administrator," consolidating more budget authority in that office, little of this process is likely to change in the foreseeable future. Consequently, communication and cooperation will continue to be essential in adequately supporting Town Budget Development.

HUMAN RESOURCES

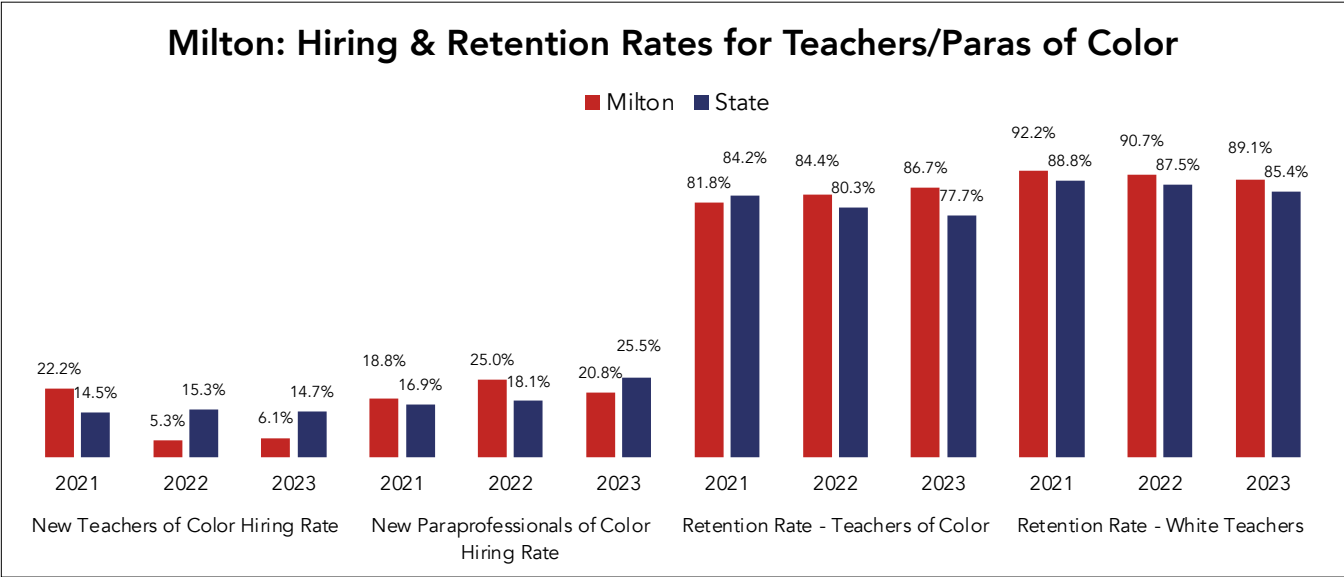
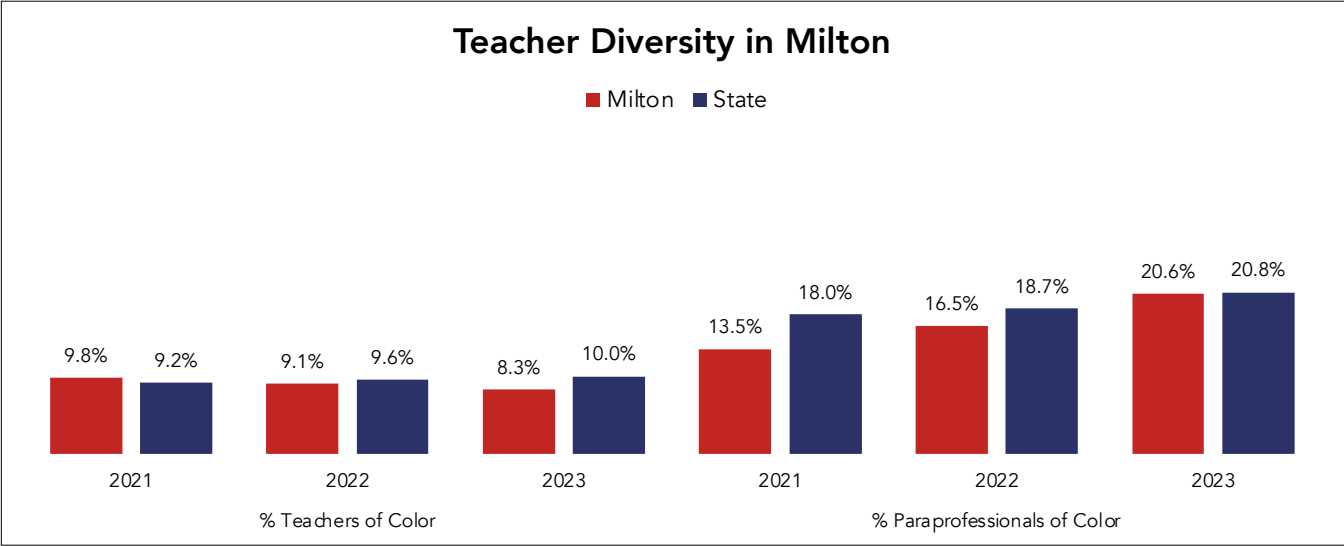
The School Business Office consists of the Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations, an Accounts Payable employee, a Payroll employee and a Budget Analyst/Grants employee, the latter being only 4 days per week. A half-time Facilities Rental staff member also handles all revenue turnovers to the Town Treasurer.

The Human Resources responsibilities for the District are split between the Schools and the Town. While all School employees are technically Town employees, under the Education Reform Act they are hired by the School Principals, with oversight provided by the Schools. Benefits, such as Health or Dental Insurance, are handled by the Town's Human Resources Director while other activities, such as attendance and other contractual obligations, are monitored by the School Department. Teachers are members of the Massachusetts Teachers Retirement System which is handled by the Schools but all other employees are members of the Milton Retirement System, which is administered by the Town.



The Schools' Human Resource operations are managed by the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Human Resources working through an Administrative Assistant who also functions as Human Resources Administrator. All position vacancies are posted through the School Spring website. References to that website are posted on other sites as well including the NEMNET Diversity Recruiting and Consulting firm, the Massachusetts Partnership for Diversity in Education, the Massachusetts Association of School Business Officials, and the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents.

MPS strives to hire and retain staff of color. Ultimately, we want the teacher population to mirror that of the student population. In Milton, students of color account for 33% of the district population; the state's comparable population is 45%. The graphs below outline MPS' work in diversifying the workforce:



All hiring committees are required to complete anti-bias training prior to screening applicants. Once hired, professional staff are assigned a mentor for their first year of employment. Teaching staff also attend two days of orientation with their mentors prior to the beginning of the school year. The mentor program qualifies as an induction program for the purpose of licensure through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The potential confusion caused by the division of Human Resources responsibilities between the School and Town combined with minimal staffing on the School side is clearly an area for future consideration. Coordination between the Town and Schools, concrete delineation of duties, and clear communication of these systems to all employees should be a goal.

COMMUNICATION

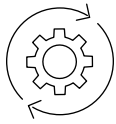
The District uses several communication platforms. The mass notification system is Blackboard/Finalsite, which is used to send emails, texts, and phone calls district or school-wide. This is year two of using the Smore newsletter platform, with 125 licenses throughout the district. Teachers, teams, principals, and the district use Smore to communicate weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly with families. Schools and teachers also send emails through PowerSchool or Gmail. Teachers and staff who communicate with families whose primary language is not English use Talking Points, an automatic translation service.

Operationally, establishing common communication platforms and protocols across grade levels, schools, departments, and the district is essential to communicating effectively with stakeholders. Refreshing the website to make it more accessible for families and staff is a priority.

Addressing transparency through stronger, more targeted communication on curriculum, decision making, and school and district operations is crucial in keeping all stakeholders heard, engaged, and informed.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

- Review facilities maintenance structure to identify efficiencies in staffing. Determine efficacy of hiring permanent maintenance personnel rather than contracting services.
- Investigate the addition of a Business Office staff member to provide necessary redundancy in payroll and accounts payable.
- Collaborate with the Town to update and streamline our shared accounting software to improve operability, efficiency, and service to employees.
- Determine systemic organizational structures in order to respond to the Proposition 2 ½ operating override that is required every 3-4 years to sustain adequate school funding.
- Develop and update Human Resources systems to respond to limits in organizational capacity. Hire a human resources director. Revamp the hiring process to make it more equitable. Determine and respond to factors involved in hiring a diverse workforce.
- Redesign communication systems to increase student, staff, and community engagement.



Implementation Development

The review of Milton Public Schools reveals deep capacity, strong commitment, and inspired engagement. As this Priority Report has illustrated, however, the lack of systems and cohesion throughout the organization is a significant finding that is central to MPS reaching the objectives we have established as a learning community.

Over the course of spring 2024, an implementation plan will be developed to address how current investment in initiatives aligns to the foundational goals of the 22-27 Strategic Plan and the findings of this Priority Report. This work will include the creation of a secondary operational implementation plan that exists alongside the Strategic Plan to create coherence and direction in all Milton Public Schools initiatives. Findings point to significant systems-level development to build an organizational foundation from which to move towards continuous improvement.

This plan will not be created in a vacuum; MPS students, staff, and community will collectively provide input and direction to ensure that key initiatives we undertake, and those we discontinue, move us away from fragmentation and towards coherence.

