Defining our Path

A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR EDUCATION IN WORCESTER

2018–2023

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Dear Worcester Students, Families, and Community,

It is with great pleasure that we share *Defining Our Path: A Strategic Plan for Education in Worcester*. Worcester Public Schools (WPS) is well-known for many of its successful practices, which foster real-world skills and student achievement. While we celebrate our district's progress, we also recognize that there is a continuous need for improvement in our schools and in the outcomes for all our students. We understand that the continued success of the district's mission can only be accomplished through a community-wide vision coupled with a commitment to action and sustained engagement.

The strategic planning process was a unique experience. In many strategic plans, the school district is the singular driving force. However, our community seized the opportunity to assemble a diverse group of community leaders—with invaluable support from the school district—to consider ways to address the needs of Worcester students. Our approach recognizes the central role of the schools in the life of our community. It acknowledges the vital need for the full support of WPS by all sectors of the city, as well as the shared work required to achieve educational excellence in all schools for all students.

Conversations among community leaders, families, educators, and students during the process forged new relationships and deepened existing networks. We also expanded our community's capacity to consider a broad range of perspectives, data, and outstanding educational practices. Through subcommittees, representative of multiple stakeholder groups, we explored critical areas of need identified by the community and developed recommendations for improvement. We engaged state and national education leaders to identify a range of education best practices that could be replicated. Our work was effective, but not without challenges. We delved into the nuances of quantitative data; considered the experiences, hopes, and concerns of stakeholders; and wrestled with very real financial and contractual constraints. We worked beyond mere accommodation to deep consensus. Our most important takeaways were that policies, practices, and initiatives should drive towards the district's student-centered goals and that substantive changes in the finances of the district are essential for high-quality, system-wide improvements.

Our plan is aspirational, inspirational, and innovative. In some cases, it is admittedly but intentionally ambitious. It considers new approaches to school and district design, teaching and learning, and finances. The plan recognizes that the work of schools is about both the transfer of knowledge, skills, and information and the fostering of safe and nurturing learning environments that support social and emotional skills critical for student well-being.

Defining Our Path: A Strategic Plan for Education in Worcester articulates a commitment to continue Worcester's renaissance by placing the city's children, and the future that they represent, at the center of our shared work. It calls for the resources of a community, not just a school district, to fulfill that mission. Achieving the goals of the plan will demand hard work and unflagging support from each sector of the city. It will also require the dedicated involvement of the state. We must ensure state funding levels realize the vision of the 1993 Education Reform Act and guarantee equitable outcomes in both high-wealth and low-wealth communities. The result of these actions will be well worth the effort—a system of schools focused on and able to educate every child for sound futures as positive contributors to our community and beyond.

Toward a Brighter Future,

Jennifer Davis Carey & Tim McGourthy
Strategic Plan Co-Chairs

In Collaboration with
Maureen Binienda
Superintendent, Worcester Public Schools

Worcester, the *Heart of the Commonwealth*, is the second-largest city in Massachusetts. It is a community with a history of innovation and progress. Modern-day Worcester is rich in assets, home to leaders in education, healthcare, and technology; with more than 5,000 local businesses, 70 cultural institutions, nine colleges/universities, and the third-largest public-school system in the Commonwealth.[1] A forward-looking community, Worcester seeks to cultivate the success of the next generation to ensure that it continues to thrive for years to come.

Worcester is a growing global community. Since 1990, the population has increased 8%, bringing shifts in the racial, ethnic, age, gender, and household composition of the city.[2,3] The city's international community has grown more than 200%, enhancing both the linguistic and cultural vibrancy of the city.[A,4] The growth of Worcester's racial and ethnic communities also exceed national trends. The number of residents of Latino, African American, and Asian descent has grown by more than 150% since 1990, while the number of residents of European descent has declined 13%.[5]

With growth in the population, Worcester has experienced new challenges. Nearly one-third of the city's youth are living in poverty.[6] In addition, the student population is frequently changing. In 2017, the percent of students moving in and out of the school district during the year was 17.8%, which indicates a highly transitional learning population and impacts funding designations.[7] The effects of youth experiencing significant trauma have also become more apparent. Educators report a high frequency of student exposure to childhood adversity, ranging from housing instability to the statewide opioid crisis.[8] Worcester is also a leading resettlement community for refugees, serving populations particularly vulnerable to increased hardships as they adapt to their new community.[9] The changes in the Worcester community and the new challenges it faces demand consideration of new ways to support and educate an increasingly diverse and global population.
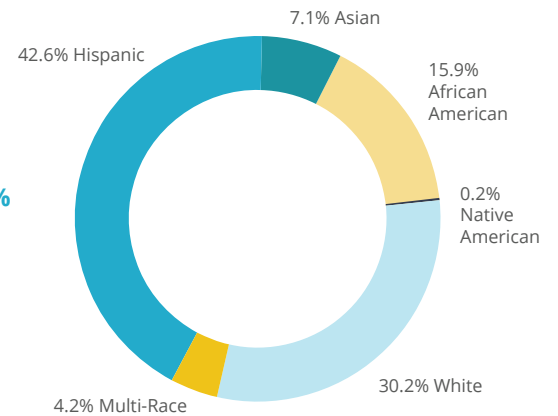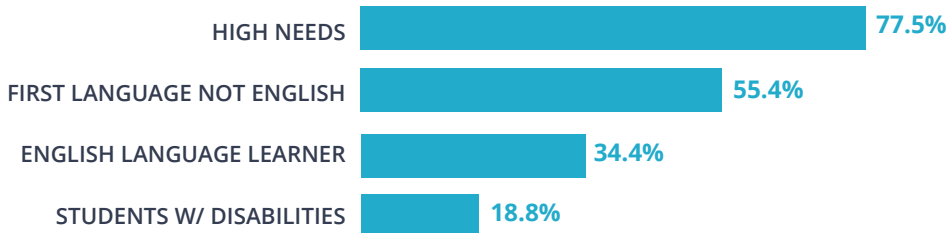
Through the first strategic plan in 26 years, district and community leaders are looking to set a new vision for the education of the city's youth. Worcester Public Schools (WPS) sits at the center of these community-level changes and strives to play a positive and important role in cultivating the city's future creators, reformers, healers, and leaders. The success of WPS is critical to the economic vitality of the city. By 2024, 75% of jobs in the region's fastest growing industries (health, technology, management, and services) will require a postsecondary credential (professional certificate, bachelor's degree, or graduate degree).[10] While 84% of Worcester residents over 25 have a high school diploma or equivalent, only 37% hold a postsecondary credential (associate degree or higher).[11] Ensuring student success in public schools—and a pathway to and through a postsecondary credential—will help meet regional labor needs while creating a highly skilled and educated workforce that enhances the vitality of the city.

However, the complex workplace that our students will face in years ahead cannot be addressed by WPS alone. Both the depth of need and the absence of necessary financial resources to operate the school district demands the collective action of the entire community. This strategic plan, collaboratively designed and with a commitment to collaborative implementation, addresses persistent challenges in the district and offers supports to schools in the interest of creating an environment for teaching and learning that fosters student success. As the priority of the district is excellence in WPS regardless of the financial climate, the plan incorporates actions that can be implemented immediately and calls attention to ones that will require significant financial support and collaboration to realize.

A The most common nations of origin for recent immigrants are Vietnam, Ghana, Dominican Republic, Albania, and Liberia.[11]

25,306 STUDENTS

HIGH NEEDS — **77.5%**

FIRST LANGUAGE NOT ENGLISH — **55.4%**

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER — **34.4%**

STUDENTS W/ DISABILITIES — **18.8%**

7.1% Asian

42.6% Hispanic

15.9% African American

0.2% Native American

30.2% White

4.2% Multi-Race

Community

183,677
RESIDENTS

83% OF SCHOOL-AGE RESIDENTS ATTEND WPS

35%
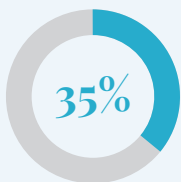
SPEAK A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH

90+
Languages

Schools

44
K-12 Schools

7 INNOVATION SCHOOLS

22

Schools Met State Targets

13
CAREER PATHWAY PROGRAMS

Outcomes

2.2%
DROPOUT

86% FIVE YEAR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE

94%
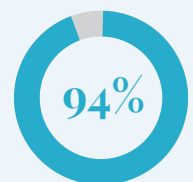
ATTENDANCE RATE

4.3%
Dropout for ELL

5

Mission of Worcester Public Schools

To provide all students the opportunity to advance their scholarship with a rigorous core curriculum and high-quality instruction. This enables students to discover the expanse of their academic talents, shape the quality of their character, and develop the confidence to become conscientious, reflective citizens who are empowered to better our community and our world.[14]

Our Vision for 2023

Worcester Public Schools will be a national leader in education, offering high-quality learning experiences, ensuring that all young people are prepared to thrive, and equipping them to become engaged citizens in their community.

Theory of Change

IF we embrace a student-centered approach that:

- fosters innovation in schools;
- provides vital supports for teaching and learning;
- ensures access to modern technology;
- develops the critical thinking and technical skills of all students; and
- leverages the input of families and community;

THEN we will build a system of diverse, high-performing schools that can equip all students with the academic, social, and technical skills necessary to thrive.

Focus Areas

- CULTURE OF INNOVATION
- ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
- WELCOMING SCHOOLS
- INVESTMENT IN EDUCATORS
- TECHNOLOGY & OPERATIONS

Where We're Headed[13]

WPS STUDENTS WILL

Current	2023
31% ➡	**47%**

MEET/EXCEED EXPECTATIONS ON 3RD GRADE ELA MCAS

65% ➡	**76%**

ENROLL IN POSTSECONDARY OPPORTUNITIES[B]

17% ➡	**14%**

REDUCE CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

1:4 ➡	**1:1**

ACCESS TECHNOLOGY (STUDENT TO DEVICE RATIO)

WPS WILL

INCREASE PER PUPIL EXPENDITURE BY

⬆ **8%**

INCREASE NUMBER OF HIGH PERFORMING SCHOOLS BY

⬆ **20%**

INCREASE DIVERSITY OF NEW HIRES BY

⬆ **25%**

B Students attending a private or public 2 or 4-year college within 16 months of graduation

COORDINATING COMMITTEE
17 Members
District managers, along with university and community leaders, met monthly for review of local resources and state data to craft recommendations for the strategic plan.

SUBCOMMITTEES
50 Members
Five groups of approximately 10 participants including parents, recent students, educators, and community members reviewed district data, prioritized challenges, and developed recommendations for strategy development within specific focus areas.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE
50 Members
Parents, educators, school committee, community, city, and university leaders met monthly to investigate challenges facing the district and weigh in on strategies for improving WPS

Engaging the Community

184
SURVEY RESPONSES

130
FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

300
UNIQUE FORUM ATTENDEES

40
STATE/DISTRICT DATA SETS

About the Strategic Planning Process

Launched in June 2017, the strategic planning process was a community-driven effort led by Worcester Education Collaborative (WEC) and Worcester Regional Research Bureau (WRRB) in collaboration with WPS. Organizers recognized the need for a jointly developed strategic plan able to address the growth and demographic changes of the community, new economic demands, new expectations and methods in teaching and learning, and achievement gaps that persist despite concerted efforts for improvement. These organizations, representative of multiple sectors of the community, and others with a vested interest in education, assumed collective responsibility for charting a course toward success for WPS.

CONTEXT

WPS has made progress in improving several outcomes, including significant gains in attendance and noteworthy services for English Language Learners, resulting in the lowest dropout rate for a large urban district in the Commonwealth.[15] However, gaps in students' academic proficiency, growth, and achievement remain.[16] Spurred by these findings and the transition in district leadership, the 2016 report, *The Urgency for Excellence: Considerations for the School Committee and New Superintendent of Schools in Worcester*, called for a new approach to fostering student success: the development of a city-wide vision and plan for educational improvement.[17]

Following the report's release, community leaders representing businesses, foundations, nonprofits, and service agencies signed the Worcester Compact for Public Education (Worcester Compact), a public document detailing their commitment to educational improvement in the city. The group secured private financial support for the strategic planning process and engaged students, alumni, parents, educators, and community-based organizations to participate.[18] The strategies listed in the plan are designed to enhance success for all students and include action steps for the whole community. The collaborative model established through the Worcester Compact and continued through this process was foundational to our approach, and differentiates this document from any other known resource.

PARTICIPANTS

The strategic planning process was informed by voices throughout the community. From June 2017 to January 2018, community and district organizers along with strategic planning facilitators from the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy met with more than 400 Worcester residents in focus groups and forums. Events were held throughout the district and offered in multiple languages to maximize participation and ease of access. Individuals also had the chance to share their input through surveys on their experiences with WPS and education in the City of Worcester more broadly. Respondents included students, families, educators, and community members.

Finally, the strategic planning process featured a multi-tiered committee system that engaged stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and roles in the community. More than 70 community members participated in one or more committees. The planning groups included an Advisory and a Coordinating committee as well as five subcommittees focused on high priority areas for the city: Access to Availability of Higher Level Learning; Educator Resources and Development; Governance, Finance, and Operations; Instructional Resources and Technology; and Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate. With the help of the Rennie Center, these committees reviewed more than 40 data sets from state and district systems, along with 30 local and national journal publications providing insights on budget, population demographics, discipline, culture, and educational best practices.[c]

Lessons Learned

Committee members considered the themes and trends that emerged from the conversations, meetings, and data review to refine and prioritize the recommendations of the strategic plan. Key learnings included[19]:

- Worcester's residents are dedicated to high-quality education for all its students. The commitment of teachers, staff, and the community to support students is what allows the district to operate and succeed despite challenges.

- Offering high-quality learning options for all students—regardless of age, ability, language, background, and/or neighborhood—is paramount. It is critical that improvements in learning experiences address needs from early childhood education through high school and benefit the whole student population, including advanced learners, students with disabilities, and English language learners.

- Improvements must also address complementary learning needs, such as developing social and emotional skills, cultivating a welcoming and supportive environment in schools, enhancing communication and partnership with families, and overcoming any unintentional barriers that hinder student success.

- Specific calls to action include increased options for advanced learning; better access to technology, greater support for postsecondary transitions, new and enhanced facilities, and more collaborative learning opportunities for educators.

- All stakeholders described the dire need to increase the district's operating budget, including through additional funds from an improved Chapter 70 state funding formula.

These lessons inform a new vision for the district, which calls on all sectors of the city to support Worcester in becoming a national leader in urban education.

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[c] Example local reports reviewed by subcommittees include *Report of the Dialogues on Race, The Schools We Deserve, and Not Present, Not Accounted For.*

Orientation to the Plan

The strategic plan is divided into five sections aligned with the focus areas defined by the community. Each section includes information on:

What We Heard: Reflects the findings from our focus groups, document reviews, surveys, and subcommittee reports related to the focus area. This information provides insights on key challenges that the strategic plan's objectives and strategies are designed to address.

Making it Count for All Students: Highlights outcomes for a comparable urban district and state averages on key indicators. Reported metrics are based on data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and reflect the top performing comparison district in each category. Metrics are intended as a guide, rather than an expressed goal for Worcester. The list of communities was drawn from participants in the Urban Superintendents Network, based on size and demographics, and vetted by strategic plan organizers. The full list of comparison districts and additional measures are included in Appendix A.

Benchmarks for Success in 2023: Features priority benchmarks for expected improvement (e.g., growth in students' ELA and Math performance) based on the successful implementation of this plan's strategies. A full list of improvement benchmarks associated with each section is included in Appendix B.

Current Resources and Initiatives: Worcester has many resources and initiatives that exist to support the action steps of the plan. This section acknowledges the ongoing work to address core challenges and highlights initiatives that may need to be scaled to achieve maximum impact.

Subsequent pages detail objectives and action steps that will guide improvement efforts over the next five years. Each objective includes feasibility metrics established in collaboration with district and community leaders that delineate the level of effort and financial cost.

Investment: The financial investment needed to implement the objective

$ **$0-$100,000** No or minimal additional cost for implementation

$$ **$100,000 - $499,000** Seed funding required for implementation

$$$ **$500,000+** Substantial funding must be added for implementation

Level of Effort: The amount of resources, coordination, or operational change that would be required

★ Little effort required to implement objective (resources already exist)

★★ Medium effort required to implement objective (resources already exist, but may need to be coordinated or repurposed)

★★★ Maximum effort required to implement objective (new resources must be developed or brought on)

Culture of Innovation

The achievement gap is a persistent and critical obstacle to ensuring the future personal, academic, and career success of today's youth.[20] In Worcester, the gap exists primarily for students with disabilities, and those from low-income, Latino, and/or language-diverse backgrounds, who are less likely than their peers to reach grade-level benchmarks and graduate from high school.[21]

In Massachusetts, research shows that practices focused on school leadership, collective teacher efficacy, rigorous instruction, and high expectations for all students are critical to turning the tide in schools.[22] Worcester has undertaken numerous initiatives to support the needs of students, with localized success.[23] To see systemwide change, structures must be established so that effective practices can be tested and brought to scale. By developing a culture of innovation, that supports the incorporation of established and emerging best practices, the district will make the necessary adjustments that enable all students to learn and thrive, while ensuring enhancements (and lessons learned from them) benefit the entire school system.

WHAT WE HEARD [24]

- Educators and school leaders need more resources and autonomy to make changes and employ practices that better support students.

- New approaches are needed to address student achievement gaps and foster improvement.

CURRENT RESOURCES & INITIATIVES [25]

- Principal Learning Network

- New Principals' Institute and Mentoring

MAKING IT COUNT FOR ALL STUDENTS

Our actions will drive improvement for all students and—most critically—change the course for our highest-need students. In the 2016-2017 school year[26]:

49%

of the 44 schools in Worcester ranked in the top 80% statewide

91%

of the 11 schools in a comparable urban district ranked in the top in the top 80% statewide

69%

of the 1514 schools in Massachusetts are met or exceeded state learning targets

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

1. **Embrace a culture of innovation that develops and pilots evidence-based approaches and allocates resources to address chronic student achievement gaps and underperforming schools**

   - **Target District Supports for High Needs Schools:** Create a Superintendent Schools designation, afforded to consistently underperforming settings, which provides increased supports coupled with enhanced accountability, trainings, and resources for the school to implement transformative learning approaches

   - **Proactive Supports to Enable School Improvements:** Identify and develop aggressive improvement strategies for lower-performing schools prior to required state intervention, incorporating successful turnaround practices from across Massachusetts and providing necessary operational flexibility for successful implementation

   Investment: $ $ $ **Effort:** ★ ★

2. **Increase the capacity of school leadership to leverage existing resources for school improvement**

   With support from the community we will:

   - **Enhance School Leader Training Initiatives:** Expand the New Principals' Institute through a third year of practice in partnership with community organizations, allowing aspiring and experienced principals to collaborate and catalyze innovative management practices that foster improvement and student success

   - **Provide Supports and New Learning Experiences for Veteran Leaders:** Develop an Institute for veteran principals to support continued growth and development in school management and classroom pedagogy

   Investment: $ $ **Effort:** ★ ★

3. **Identify demonstrated best practices regionally and across the globe that can be adapted to Worcester's unique conditions to alleviate achievement gaps**

   - **Sustain High Performance in Thriving Schools:** Engage and support the continued success of on-track and high-performing schools by establishing a process to set next-level targets for student learning and spread effective practices

   With support from the community, we will:

   - **Develop a Network of Schools to Pilot and Scale Evidence-Based Practice:** Design an Incubation Hub drawing on tested, effective, and transferable practices from multiple school models (e.g., community, magnet, turnaround, innovation schools, empowerment zones, and public private partnership). The hub will focus on scaling these practices in the district and be supported by a body of community members and elected officials[27]

   Investment: $ $ **Effort:** ★ ★

BENCHMARKS FOR SUCCESS IN 2023

	CURRENT	2019	2021	2023
69% OF WORCESTER SCHOOLS WILL MEET OR EXCEED STATE LEARNING TARGETS BASED ON MCAS [D]	**49%**	**56%**	**62%**	**69%**

Strategies in Action: *Incubation Hub*

Worcester Public Schools will lay the groundwork for an Incubation Hub in one of the quadrants of the district. This Hub will serve as the pilot site for innovative and best practices, drawing from those of community schools, magnet schools, innovation schools, turnaround schools and our state's empowerment zones. These practices will be refined and eventually scaled throughout the district.

[D] Measurements will be based on standardized assessments for each grade level. Though not equivalent, Next Generation MCAS will be used for elementary and middle school institution. Legacy MCAS will be used for high schools

Academic Excellence

As the third-largest school district in the state, WPS makes an important contribution in equipping today's students with knowledge and skills to become tomorrow's engaged community and productive workforce.[28] As the district builds on a legacy of success in preparing students with real-world skills, it must expand its offerings to accommodate the learning needs and interests of its diverse population, ensuring that all students can chart a path to a meaningful postsecondary opportunity.[29] In addition, it must equip students with the digital skills neccassary for success in the modern workplace.

Academic excellence starts with universal access to the learning environment and a focus on foundational skills at the elementary level. This ensures that essential building blocks for knowledge are well-established, laying the groundwork for more advanced courses in later years.[30] Given the importance of rigorous learning experiences across all grades, WPS will focus on enhancing early education, expanding the breadth and depth of coursework, increasing options for demonstrating knowledge, developing students' technological skills, and providing additional supports for students' college or career aspirations.

WHAT WE HEARD

- Students and educators wanted increased course variety and the opportunity to delve deeply into subject matter and explore current topics.
- Students need more opportunities to develop real-world skills such as financial literacy, career skills, and civics.
- College and career decisions are at the forefront of discussion for middle and high school students; students and parents want planning supports for college and career decision making to start earlier (e.g., middle school) so that youth can be intentional about the learning opportunities they select.

MAKING IT COUNT FOR **ALL STUDENTS**

Our actions will drive improvement for all students and—most critically—change the course for our highest-need students. Currently[31]:

31%

of 3rd graders in Worcester meet grade level benchmarks in English Language Arts MCAS

54%

of 3rd graders in a comparable urban district meet grade level brenchmarks in English Language Arts MCAS

47%

of 3rd Graders in MA meet grade level benchmarks in English Language Arts MCAS

- Students and parents advocated for more variety in programming inside and outside the school day, including sports, additional advanced courses, and the arts.
- Students and educators need increased access to technology and its full and sustainable integration in classrooms to enhance digital skills.
- Parents and residents noted the importance of expanded partnerships with the community to address district needs, including enrichment initiatives, technology deficits, and transportation.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

CURRENT RESOURCES & INITIATIVES

- Targeted, evidenced-based literacy and math interventions in elementary schools
- Early college opportunities (e.g., 100 Males to College, dual enrollment initiatives)
- Career technical education pathways throughout the district
- 2018 donation to support 2:1 technology access for students in grades 4-8

BENCHMARKS FOR SUCCESS IN 2023

	CURRENT	2019	2021	2023
47% OF 3RD GRADERS WILL MEET OR EXCEED BENCHMARKS IN READING	31%	36%	41%	47%
49% OF 3RD GRADERS WILL MEET OR EXCEED BENCHMARKS IN MATH	29%	36%	42%	49%
100% OF STUDENTS CAN ENGAGE IN A DIGITAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE *(Course or skill-building activity)*	30%	53%	76%	100%

Strategies in Action: *Worcester City Enrichment Academy*

Worcester Public Schools—in collaboration with local universities, cultural institutions, and community organizations—will lay the groundwork for the creation of a year-long enrichment program providing instruction, academic support, and experiential learning opportunities for advanced learners.

Based on national models of accelerated learning, this program will be available to WPS students in grades 7-12 to enhance their academic knowledge and skills while providing opportunities to pursue specific subject areas in-depth and cultivate their expertise. The program will offer mentoring from local college students and learning opportunities throughout the school year hosted by the city's cultural and community organizations. In the summer, grade cohorts will participate in intensive learning seminars on Worcester's college campuses. Juniors will have the opportunity to experience a short summer residency.

More than 300 qualified students will be able to participate in the Academy each year (with an expected enrollment of five students per grade, per school). Students will be accepted by application or nomination from each middle and high school. The program is anticipated to begin in the 2022-2023 school year.
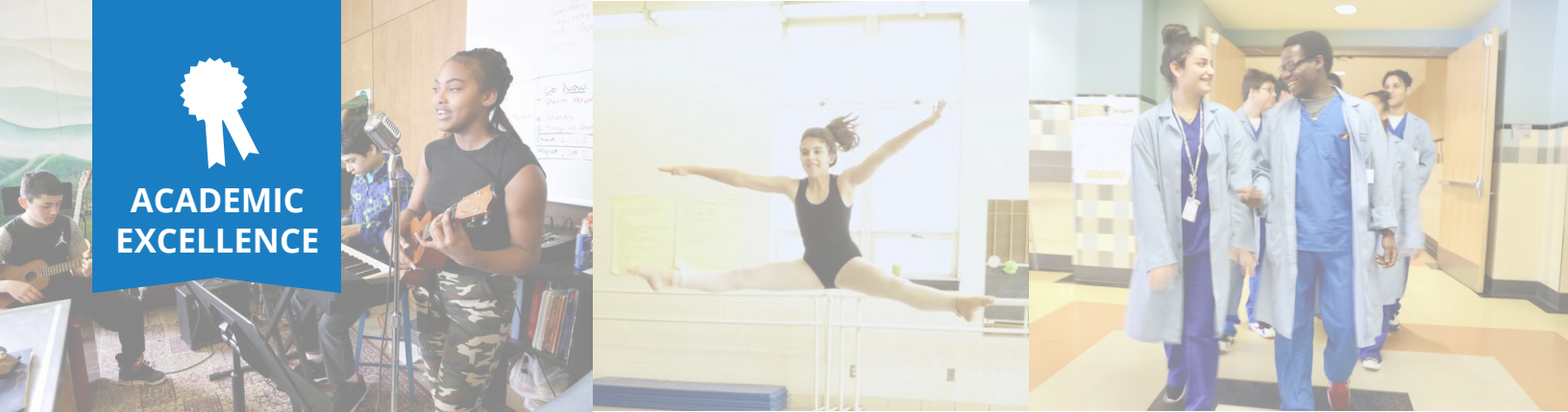
ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

1. **Increase opportunities for students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills and demonstrate knowledge**

   - **Expand Early Learning Interventions:** Increase implementation of, and access to, early literacy and math interventions for all students through the 6th grade
   - **Scale Early Learning Solutions:** Pilot early literacy initiatives in select elementary schools to determine what may be the best fit for a districtwide approach
   - **Implement Community-Based Learning Opportunities:** Strengthen experiential learning options across grades K-12, providing students with multiple strategies to acquire and demonstrate conceptual understanding
   - **Employ Demonstrated College and Career Academic Sequence:** Align class offerings to state requirements and ensure all students can access learning opportunities to fulfill the state's recommended course sequence for college and career readiness (MassCORE)
   - **Offer More Advanced Course Options:** Increase the number of advanced learning options and enrichment opportunities in 9th grade to better prepare students to succeed in advanced courses throughout high school
   - **Diversify and Increase Electives Available to High School Students:** Increase the variety of secondary elective course offerings to foster deeper and broader subject matter exploration in response to student interests and relevant societal needs

   Investment: $ $ **Effort:** ★ ★

2. **Develop students' digital competence and ensure access to digital learning and computer science (DLCS) curricula**

   - **Develop Digital Learning and Computer Science Options:** Create course curricula to meet state standards for DLCS and provide learning opportunities at the elementary, middle, and high school levels
   - **Implement Digital Skill-Building Opportunities:** Develop learning opportunities for students and their families to develop foundational digital skills
   - **Increase Access to Digital Learning Options and Courses:** Align the curricula to include effective technology integration strategies and blended learning opportunities and ensure all students have the opportunity to participate in at least one digital learning experience each year

   Investment: $ $ $ **Effort:** ★ ★

3. **Increase career awareness and exploration at all grade levels through a coordinated and tiered career learning program**

- **Foster Career Skills Development:** Vertically align career exploration experiences from elementary through high school, creating age-appropriate learning experiences that are rigorous, skill-building, and linked to meaningful postsecondary pathways

- **Implement** *My Career and Academic Plan* **and Mentoring:** Cultivate students' skills, interests, and accomplishments with relevant learning experiences using personalized learning plans and partnerships with students, families, and the community

- **Increased Availability and Access of Career Learning Experiences:** Create opportunities for students to develop real-world skills through career pathways programs at their own or other district schools

- **Enhance Career Exploration and Planning Process through Technology:** Use technology to streamline and support the postsecondary planning process by increasing access to learning resources, career assessments, and developing a digital portfolio of students' accomplishments

With support from the community, we will:

- **Increase Community-Based Career Learning Opportunities:** Expand career learning opportunities for students by scaling existing pathways and developing new initiatives in partnership with business and community organizations

- **Develop Afterschool Career Learning Opportunities:** Enhance in-school and out-of-school-time options for students to participate in career exploration programs

- **Implement Operational Supports That Increase Access to Career Learning:** Increase access to vocational learning opportunities by identifying resources that provide the necessary structural supports for students to participate (e.g., schedule, transportation)

- **Implement Digital Skill Building Opportunities:** Develop learning opportunities for families to build foundational digital skills

Investment: $ $ $ **Effort:** ★ ★ ★

4. **Leverage Worcester's distinct community assets to increase choices in learning opportunities and academic support through partnerships with higher education and community organizations**

With support from the community, we will:

- **Document Effective Programs and Monitor Barriers to Access:** Establish partnerships with local universities and/or research centers to document existing advanced learning opportunities (e.g. dual enrollment, STEM programs, etc.), identify barriers to access, and monitor program impacts as well as effects of improvements

- **Monitor Student Interest to Design Relevant Coursework:** Develop and maintain an information system that monitors student interest and course needs to inform future learning options as well as academic supports

- **Collaborate with Community Leaders for Comprehensive Student Supports:** Establish a body that includes representatives from youth-serving organizations to develop strategies for supporting students' needs beyond the school schedule (e.g., after school, summer, and vacations)

- **Offer Credit-Bearing Courses in Partnership with Colleges and Universities:** Partner with local colleges and universities to offer high school students access to additional credit-bearing course opportunities through dual enrollment

- **Identify District Liaison to Organize and Manage Community Partnerships:** Develop a comprehensive and coordinated approach to community partnerships that is managed and executed by district liaison

- **Develop an Enrichment Academy Supported by Learning Institutions in the Community:** Develop a public/private enrichment academy to support advanced learners, including after-school and summer opportunities for children in grades 7-12, that leverages Worcester's distinct community, STEM, and civic assets

Investment: $ $ **Effort:** ★ ★

Welcoming Schools

Students sit at the center of a network of individuals vested in their success. Parents, educators, and community leaders know the value of developing the talent and skills of Worcester's youth so that they can become thriving adults and strong community members capable of addressing the demands of the workforce. A whole-child approach ensures that education accounts for many of the challenges that extend beyond the schools but have an impact on students' ability to learn. Research shows that an emphasis on social-emotional learning aids the development of the skills needed for advancing academically, building positive relationships, communicating effectively, and thriving in the face of adversity, thereby increasing the likelihood of success in college and career.[32]

Schools that foster positive culture—and build partnerships between families and the community—create effective learning environments that can address whole-child learning needs. Leveraging citywide assets for student success, Worcester will foster positive school culture by increasing resources to address students' social-emotional needs, raising awareness about trauma, building competence around ethnic and youth culture, and enhancing wraparound supports. Worcester will also focus on enhancing communication efforts with families and the community to ensure that this work is coordinated and allows students, their families, and educators to feel confident, nurtured, and able to thrive in school.

WHAT WE HEARD

- Students and educators report that schools, while designed to be conducive to learning, can be stressful environments. All stakeholders request additional resources to support social-emotional learning and problem-solving skills.
- A notable number of students and parents express a need for schools to provide warm and welcoming environments, as well as a need to identify and alter practices and policies that have an unintentional negative effect on school culture.
- Students, parents, and educators describe a need for increased sensitivity to cultural and individual differences, especially when communicating about complex topics such as academic performance, adversity, and life circumstance that may impact school performance and adjustment.
- Parents need increased connections with educators through two-way communication and easier access to student information, such as grades.

MAKING IT COUNT FOR ALL STUDENTS

Our actions will drive improvement for all students and—most critically—change the course for our highest-need students. Currently:[33]

17%

of Worcester Public Schools students are absent from school for 10% or more of the school year

13%

of students in a comparable urban district are absent from school 10% or more of the school year

14%

of students in Massachusetts are absent from school for 10% or more of the school year

CURRENT RESOURCES & INITIATIVES

- Wraparound supports and trauma-focused initiatives (e.g., Worcester Healthy Environment and Resilience in Schools)
- Special Education Department parent trainings and Special Education Advisory Council
- Citywide Parent Planning Advisory Council (CPPAC)
- WIPLE (Worcester Involved in Parent Leadership Education) Trainings
- Chronic Absenteeism Task Force

WELCOMING SCHOOLS

BENCHMARKS FOR SUCCESS IN 2023

	CURRENT	2019	2021	2023
REDUCE CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM TO 14% FOR STUDENTS	17%	16%	15%	14%
INCREASE THE NUMBER OF SCHOOLS WITH AN ACTIVE SITE COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY BY 50%	N/A	10%	30%	50%
REDUCE NUMBER OF YOUTH DISCIPLINED FOR NON-DRUG, NON-VIOLENT, AND NON-CRIMINAL OFFENSES BY 30%	71%	61%	51%	41%
REDUCE NUMBER OF STUDENTS SUSPENDED FOR NON-DRUG, NON-VIOLENT, AND NON-CRIMINAL OFFENSES BY 33%	4.8%	4.48%	3.84%	3.2%

Tackling a National Challenge

Experts increasingly highlight the disproportionate application of disciplinary measures to students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.[34] Addressing potential bias and resolving non-violent confrontations prior to the application of disciplinary measures for these subgroups offers an opportunity for WPS to substantially reduce overall disciplinary actions and address long-term inequitable outcomes. Worcester boasts a diverse student body and is cognizant that discipline must be appropriate and equitably implemented. As schools work to improve school climate and student engagement and reduce the overall need for disciplinary measures, the application of discipline in the African-American, Latino, and Special Education populations deserves special consideration. According to data reported by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:

70%

More than 70% of Worcester's disciplinary actions in the 2016-2017 school year were for non-drug, non-violent, and non-criminal offenses exceeding state averages and most comparable urban districts.

Youth of color represented 80% of discipline actions for non-drug, non-violent, and non-criminal offenses as compared to representing 70% of the total population.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

1. **Prioritize development of systems that support a shared vision for social and emotional development across the district**

   - **Engage Working Group to Design and Implement Whole-Child Support System:** Convene district and building leaders to create a 3-year multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) implementation plan

   - **Employ a System to Proactively Respond to Student Needs**: Develop an early warning system to identify students' needs, establish benchmarks for intervention, and provide personalized and proactive support for high-risk students

   - **Monitor and Take Action to Improve Differences in Outcomes Among Student Groups:** Develop a district approach to monitor differences among groups in academic performance, absenteeism, and behavior referrals and take corrective actions if gaps between groups exceed a specific threshold (e.g., 25%)

   - **Monitor Student Needs and Allocate Appropriate Supports:** Establish a consistent process for data conversations among educators and administrators to monitor progress and determine necessary supports and interventions

   - **Support Behavioral and Mental Health of Students and Educators:** Implement an internal comprehensive behavioral health program for all schools

   - **Increase Availability of Wraparound Resources:** Develop a wraparound coordinator position in all buildings, beginning with secondary and Superintendent's Schools

     Investment: $ $ **Effort:** ★ ★

2. **Implement comprehensive, district-wide approach to monitoring and measuring social and emotional growth and school climate**

   - **Measure Social-Emotional Learning and School Climate:** Employ validated measures of social-emotional development and school climate in each building

   - **Develop Districtwide Expectations for Social-Emotional Learning:** Articulate district goals for social-emotional competencies, to be achieved through localized school-based initiatives

   - **Increase Staff Capacity to Address Trauma:** Provide training on trauma intervention and trauma-sensitive practices at each school

   - **Scale Tested Trauma Supports to All Schools:** Pending results of the Worcester HEARS initiative, share best practices from the program framework at all schools (beginning with Superintendent's Schools) to monitor students' social-emotional growth

     Investment: $ $ **Effort:** ★ ★

3. **Foster and monitor positive school climate through articulation of shared values/ goals and implementation of effective practices in schools**

- **Develop District-wide Expectations for School Culture**: Articulate shared values and expectations for school climate in all public schools in Worcester and provide resources for schools to localize best practices

- **Incorporate Student Participation in School Improvements**: Provide opportunities for students to participate in age-appropriate decision-making at the school level

- **Review Discipline Practices to Ensure Equitable Outcomes:** Implement system-wide review and training on school and classroom management practices to ensure that the use of exclusionary discipline is limited, appropriate, targeted, and equitably implemented

- **Reduce Suspension Rates Across the District:** Build upon best practices from WPS, community-based programs, and beyond to include instructional and environmental supports that offer alternative consequences to suspension for non-drug, non-weapon, and non-criminal behaviors.

Investment: $ $ **Effort:** ★ ★

4. **Increase opportunities for family engagement and participation in decision making at the school level**

- **Enhance and Increase Positive Parent Engagement Experiences:** Partner with community organizations to strengthen engagement with constituents and foster a welcoming, culturally sensitive environment in each school

- **Increase Parent Engagement in School-Level Decision Making:** Increase parent awareness and engagement in school planning and decision-making opportunities by providing training to participate in school leadership initiatives (e.g., site councils, parent-teacher organizations, and CPPAC)

- **Increase Collaboration Between Parents and Teachers:** Provide co-trainings for parents and teachers on how to collaborate effectively for student success and school improvement

- **Increase Understanding of the Impact of Operational Decisions on Student Experience:** Explore including an analyst, hired by CPPAC, to consider the impact of contract provisions on students

- **Increase Ease of Access to District Information:** Develop standardized communication protocols for families' ease of access including: regular updates to the district website, multilingual communications across all contact types (e.g., phone, email), a tool for sharing sensitive information, and annual updates to contact lists (to make sure families are receiving district communications)

- **Increase Ease of Access to Student Information:** Provide timely and secure access to student information and progress indicators for families and students

- **Develop a Bilingual Parent Advisory Council:** Establish a parent advisory group that represents the diverse language community of Worcester and can contribute to school-level decision making

Investment: $ $ **Effort:** ★ ★ ★

Strategies in Action: *Systems for Support*

Worcester has an established reputation of providing critical supports to students with demonstrated need. As the district improves, the focus will shift to more proactively supporting all students. Early Warning Systems monitor student outcomes and flag areas of potential concern early on, so that course adjustments and supports can be readily made. Similarly, a multi-tiered system of support allocates resources such that all students receive high-quality basic interventions and more intensive supports are provided as needed. Worcester will prioritize the development of both systems and use data to ensure that more students remain on track throughout their academic careers by monitoring key indicators such as attendance, grades, test scores, and behavior.

WELCOMING SCHOOLS

Investing in Educators

Educators are the life force of schools. In considering how to best support students, we must also reflect on support for educators, including classroom teachers, aides, specialists, and service providers. Worcester students have a variety of learning needs that require educators to apply new approaches, such as trauma-informed instruction and personalized learning. As educators and students cultivate relationships, it is also beneficial to have a workforce with a variety of life experiences that can inspire and support students. The district will focus on recruiting a diverse, highly qualified teacher and administrative workforce, offering professional development in key instructional and support areas, and creating professional ladders and lattices to ensure career opportunities throughout an educator's tenure.

WHAT WE HEARD

- Educators are seeking increased opportunities to collaborate within their grade levels or departments as well as with special educators and specialists.
- Educators need additional funding for classroom resources and learning materials.
- Educators want increased supports for the integration and use of technology.
- Educators need increased support, including staffing, to allow for personalized and differentiated instruction in the face of increasing class sizes.

CURRENT RESOURCES & INITIATIVES

- Student Centered Coaching Workshops
- First Year Teacher Induction Program
- Partnerships in teacher education with 11 colleges in surrounding areas
- Future District Administrators training program

MAKING IT COUNT FOR ALL SCHOOLS

Our actions will drive improvement for all students and—most critically—change the course for our highest-need students. Currently[35]:

16%
of educators in Worcester identify as African American, Asian, Latino, Native American, or Multi-Race

70%
of students in Worcester identify as African American, Asian, Latino, Native American, or Multi-Race

48%
of educators in a comparable urban district identify as African American, Asian, Latino, Native American, or Multi-Race

BENCHMARKS FOR SUCCESS IN 2023

	2019	2021	2023
INCREASE DIVERSITY OF NEW HIRES BY 25%	8%	17%	25%

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

1. **Review teacher recruitment and retention approach and implement strategies that will increase access to a highly qualified, diverse teacher workforce**

   • **Increase the Number of Highly Qualified Teacher Candidates:** Partner with local teacher preparation programs to provide career pathways for top educators to train and remain in Worcester

   • **Recruit Educators Knowledgeable in Instruction in Urban Environments:** Identify and develop partnerships between the district and exemplary teacher preparation programs in urban education

   • **Expand and Enhance Recruitment of Diverse Educator Candidates:** Review recruitment and retention processes to maximize the district's ability to attract diverse candidates from across the nation as well as partner with local organizations to increase community's awareness of opportunities

   • **Provide Supports to Increase New Teacher Retention:** Enhance and scale mentoring strategies to support and retain new teachers

   • **Develop a Pipeline of Educators among WPS Students:** Strengthen existing educator development initiatives in the district using best practices from effective teacher training models

   • **Attract Recent College Graduates to WPS:** Develop a teacher residency program that recruits talent to WPS and encourages students to pursue the teaching profession

   Investment: $ $ **Effort:** ★ ★

2. **Provide pathways for educators to demonstrate mastery and advance in their professional development**

   • **Recognize Skill Acquisition with Formal Credentials:** Provide opportunities for educators to receive credentials for new skill sets or leverage expertise by becoming a building coach

   • **Develop Career Advancement Opportunities for Top Educators:** Develop opportunities for educators to become teacher leaders, based on a consistent demonstration of efficacy in the classroom. Teacher leaders will receive recognition, participate in school and district decision making, and support their colleagues

   Investment: $ $ **Effort:** ★ ★

Strategies in Action: *Diversity in Education*

As Worcester becomes more diverse, it is critical to have an educator population that reflects the various life experiences of the community. Worcester will make a concerted effort to attract and retain educators and leaders from a variety of backgrounds by establishing partnerships with reputable programs in urban education. Worcester will rely on these settings to recruit candidates who are deeply knowledgeable about how to address and support the learning needs of students in urban settings. In addition, Worcester will initiate partnerships with multicultural institutions (e.g., historically Black Colleges/Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions) to develop an educator workforce that reflects the student population. Furthermore, Worcester will employ evidence-based educator retention strategies to increase the longevity of new educators within the district. Efforts to increase diversity of the teacher workforce will launch for the 2019-2020 hiring period and continue beyond 2023.

3. **Increase educator capacity to provide high-quality instruction and address student needs by offering diverse professional development opportunities and positive supports**

    - **Provide Training in High-Need Content Areas:** Provide district-level training opportunities in emerging content areas, including but not limited to social-emotional learning, trauma-sensitive practices, and cultural sensitivity

    - **Ensure Peer Learning Opportunities District-wide:** Establish district expectations and opportunities for peer learning that can be implemented in schools

    - **Encourage Existing Peer Sharing Initiatives in Schools:** Support and encourage the development of existing communities of practice for educators

    - **Create General Classrooms with Effective Co-Teaching Models for English Language Learners:** Implement staff training in co-teaching models for general education classes with English language learners beginning with elementary educators

    - **Provide Trainings for Special and General Educators:** Offer learning opportunities on updated assessments in special education as well as support for co-teaching implementation strategies

    - **Review Positive Incentives for Educator Engagement:** Explore ways to support and re-energize educators to cultivate renewed enthusiasm and reduce non-health-related absences

    Investment: $ $ **Effort:** ★ ★

4. **Prioritize and provide supports to develop digital competence and confidence among all educators and leaders in the district to ensure the effective use of technology for teaching, learning, and communication**

    - **Use Technology to Enhance Communication Options for Educators:** Ensure that technology resources for both internal and external communication are available and that all staff are trained in their use

    - **Provide Professional Development on Available Technology:** Build the collective efficacy of teachers and leaders to utilize technology by developing a professional development plan based on current educator needs

    - **Employ Instructional Coaches for Technology Integration:** Train instructional coaches in digital literacy at each school. Identify at least six educators with advanced technology and instruction skills to serve as master coaches who provide learning sessions for peers through a "train the trainer" model

    - **Employ District Liaison in Digital Learning and Computer Science:** Identify and bring on board a district liaison to work with educators to create and monitor K-12 DLCS curriculum

    - **Increase Training Districtwide on Technology-Enhanced Classrooms:** Provide trainings on technical skills as well as strategies to maximize the impact of technology-integrated instruction

    - **Provide Variety in Continued Learning Opportunities:** Offer self-paced and diverse professional learning for teachers

    Investment: $ $ $ **Effort:** ★ ★

Technology & Operations

The vision of Worcester as a national leader in urban education can only be realized through wide-scale improvements in teaching and learning supported by a sustainable infrastructure. Worcester must address challenges that deeply impact the learning experience in the district—such as access to technology inside and outside the school building, transportation options for after school programming, and funding gaps. This will require coordination among district administrators, School Committee members, municipal leaders, and community members. Together, the community can develop collaborative interim solutions and advocate for the foundational issue of underfunding in the school district. By working together to improve our schools and strategizing to increase state funding, we will be well-equipped to develop an infrastructure that can support excellence in education.

WHAT WE HEARD [36]

- There is a need for increased coordination between the School Committee, City Council, and district leadership to prioritize, support, and implement improvements for the schools.

- The current budget of the district is insufficient to effectively operate and educate all students, because of a $90 million gap between foundation formula calculations and actual spending.

- In 2017, unfunded budget needs totaled $12.9 million, including resources such as textbooks, furniture, and instructional technology.

- Critical improvements to physical spaces, transportation, and programming can be better and more consistently addressed with additional financial supports.

- Educators and students expressed the need for enhanced wireless infrastructure and access to devices for teaching and learning.

MAKING IT COUNT FOR ALL SCHOOLS

Our actions will drive improvement for all students and—most critically—change the course for our highest-need students. Currently[37]:

$14,492
on average, is allocated per pupil within Worcester

$15,545
on average, is allocated per pupil for students in Massachusetts

$20,247
on average, is allocated per pupil within a comparable urban district

CURRENT RESOURCES & INITIATIVES[38]

- Building replacement plan resulting in new South High Community School and anticipated Doherty High School
- Partnership with Massachusetts State Building Authority to replace windows and boilers
- Transportation of 12,000 students and current feasibility study to insource transportation within the district

BENCHMARKS FOR SUCCESS IN 2023

	CURRENT	2019	2021	2023
INCREASE PER-PUPIL EXPENDITURE BY 8% TO STATE AVERAGE	**0%**	**3%**	**5%**	**8%**

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

1. **Coordinate and align school administration, governance, and municipal processes to prioritize and support education improvements for the success of all students**

   The community will:
   - **Review and Improve Governance Operations for Efficiency:** Review governance procedures and identify strategies to enhance the district's efficiency and foster continuous improvement
   - **Increase Opportunities for the Community to Engage in Policy Discussions:** Expand School Committee planning and strategy processes to engage the public in policy discussions
   - **Develop Joint Committee for Improvement:** Establish standing joint committee (School Committee and City Council) to address district challenges and improvement needs

   Investment: $ **Effort:** ★★

2. **Identify and establish support for fiscal strategies that enhance and scale improvements with demonstrated effectiveness**
   - **Review and Identify Strategies to Support District Priorities within Current Budget:** Engage in a targeted review of district operational and fiscal efficiency to identify strategies for addressing high-priority improvements within current budget
   - **Launch Campaign for Increased State Funding for School District:** Establish committee and campaign to advocate for an increase in the foundation budget

   Investment: $ $ **Effort:** ★★

Strategies in Action: *Quarterly Policy Forums*

Worcester aims to increase participation of a range of sectors and stakeholders in policy conversations that ultimately affect the functions and initiatives of schools. Building on existing opportunities for formal feedback through School Committee meetings, Worcester will use one meeting per quarter to engage in a rigorous briefing and dialogue around district policy and its ability to support the actions and improvements envisioned in this document for Worcester Public Schools. Through this discussion, Worcester aims to keep all stakeholders informed and coordinated on the strategic vision of the district and its successful implementation.

3. **Establish a strategic communication and outreach approach that promotes district opportunities and establishes Worcester as a leader in urban education**

- **Develop and Maintain Resources that Attract New Families to WPS:** Strengthen public presence (including web presence and social media) to promote opportunities in the school district
- **Enhance Community Awareness of WPS Offerings:** Create central information points for community members to learn about and support the district

Investment: $ $ **Effort:** ★ ★ ★

4. **Establish the infrastructure necessary to support technology access and integration across the district**

With support from the community we will:

- **Establish District Culture and Operations Around Technology:** Develop policies and procedures for technology access, use, and improvement that will facilitate district-wide implementation and sustainability
- **Engage an Advisory Body on Technology Rollout:** Establish a committee on technology, representative of all stakeholders, to oversee implementation and ensure alignment with community needs
- **Employ an Updated Information System:** Invest in the acquisition and support of a student information system
- **Improve Wireless Access in School Buildings:** Develop and maintain a robust wireless infrastructure to support a 1:1 device initiative throughout the district
- **Develop a Strategy to Increase Access to Technology in Classrooms:** Craft a district-wide strategy to ensure all educators have access to basic technology that effectively supports instruction
- **Increase Student Access to Devices in All Grades:** Provide access to devices to ensure that all students can use technology for personalized learning experiences
- **Establish Funding for Device Maintenance:** Develop funding mechanisms for the maintenance and replacement of technology at appropriate intervals
- **Address the Digital Divide Outside of School:** Work on solutions to improve after school access to technology and internet for student learning

Investment: $ $ $ **Effort:** ★ ★

Conclusion: *Worcester in 2023*

Through a commitment to the shared vision outlined in this plan and with the support of the entire community, Worcester Public Schools will make transformational changes to ensure all students receive a high-quality education preparing them for their goals. We believe that the intentional implementation of the strategic plan will launch a new era for the district that celebrates its legacy of excellence and enriches learning with novel approaches to meet the demands of an ever-changing global society. With an educated, talented, and skilled youth population, Worcester will be ready to thrive into its next renaissance.

Elementary Schools

Expanded literacy and math interventions

Experiential Learning Options

Interest and skills exploration activities related to future goals

Technology supported and enhanced classrooms

Social-emotional learning opportunities

Middle/High Schools

College and career exposure activities with targeted support from educators, counselors, and community mentors

Expanded course offerings at all learning levels

Worcester City Enrichment Academy for advanced learners

Social-emotional supports & resources

Advanced technology learning opportunities

Project and action-based learning

District

Comprehensive behavioral health and wraparound supports

System for monitoring student progress and provision of academic supports

Diverse, highly qualified educators who receive supports & resources for effective instruction

Increased resources for district operations

Worcester Public Schools in 2023

ALL STUDENTS WILL

1. Have access to high-quality learning experiences which leverage effective approaches;

2. Have access to rigorous and personalized learning supported by technology;

3. Gain a holistic set of skills and be supported by a network—inclusive of their families and the community—to realize their personal, academic, and professional goals;

4. Be supported by effective educators who demonstrate leadership and commitment to enhancing student learning and development; and

5. Learn in an efficient and fiscally sound district.

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SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

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Greater Worcester Community Foundation

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Brian Allen	Edward Dumphy	Ike McBride
Michael Angelini	Reverend Jose Encarnacion	Timothy J. McGourthy
Alice Ball	Patricia Eppinger	Mary Meade Montaque
Eric Batista	Timothy Garvin	Marie Morse
Chantel Bethea	Magdalena Ganias	Roger Nugent
Kwame Bidi	John Genkos	Christopher O'Keefe
Superintendent Maureen Binienda	Eve Gilmore	Susan O'Neil
Pamela Boisvert	Helen Friel	Lillian Ortiz
Anne Bureau	Liz Hamilton	Mayor Joseph Petty
Richard Burke	Robert Jennings	Xolchit Polanco-Roman
Raquel Castro-Corazzini	Steven Joseph	Beth Pond
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Donna Colorio	Linda Looft	Bertha-Elena Rojas
Dante Comparetto	Howard Lucas	Kiara Sanchez
Joseph Cox	Maura Mahoney	Roberta Schaefer
Joshua Croke	Susan Mailman	Reverend Clyde Talley
Jennifer Davis Carey	Mary Jo Marion	Victoria Waterman
Geoffrey Dickinson	Kristen Mayotte	

Worcester Education Collaborative
Demanding educational excellence for our children

The Research Bureau

Worcester Public Schools — Worcester Massachusetts

RENNIE CENTER
EDUCATION RESEARCH & POLICY

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Worcester: Where We Are and Our Comparisons[39]

	Worcester	Comparable Urban[F]	State
Innovation			
Graduation Rate- 5yr	86.4%	90.3%	89.8%
Student Growth Percentile- ELA	50%	51%	50%
Student Growth Percentile- Math	49%	52%	50%
Academic Excellence			
3rd Graders Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on MCAS - English Language Arts (%)	31%	45%	47%
3rd Graders Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on MCAS- Math (%)	29%	48%	49%
8th Graders Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on MCAS- ELA (%)	33%	46%	49%
8th Graders Meeting or Exceeding Expectations on MCAS-Math (%)	25%	46%	48%
Completion of College and Career Curriculum (MASSCORE)	92.4%	100.0%	80.9%
Positive Culture			
Dropout Rate (Grades 9-12)	2.2%	1.2%	1.8%
Students Disciplined for Non-Drug, Non-Violent, or Non-Criminal Offenses (% of All Students Disciplined)	71.3%	9.5%	63.5%
Students Disciplined (% of Total Student Population)	8.39%	.56 %	3.89%
Attendance Rate	94.1%	94.7%	94.6
Chronically Absent	16.9%	12.9%	13.5%
Educators			
Educator Proficient or Higher on Evaluation	97.4%	98.0%	95.7%
Foundations for Improvement			
Per Pupil Spending Rate	$14, 492	$20,247	$15,544

[E] All indicators and rates described within the appendix are sourced from the most current Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education statewide reports and data sets available.

[F] Boston, Brockton, Fall River, Fitchburg, Holyoke, Lawrence, Leominster, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, Revere, and Springfield Public Schools

Teacher Race and Ethnicity Comparison

	AFRICAN AMERICAN	ASIAN	HISPANIC	WHITE	NATIVE AMERICAN	NATIVE HAWAIIAN, PACIFIC ISLANDER	MULTI-RACE, NON-HISPANIC
Worcester	4.05%	1.25%	9.17%	84.05%	0	0.22%	1.26%
Best Urban Comparison	27.39%	5.09%	13.16%	52.42%	.23%	.10%	1.61%
State	3.76%	1.39%	3.90%	90.28%	0.08%	0.06%	0.52%

BENCHMARKS FOR SUCCESS IN 2023

	Current	Year 1	Year 3	Year 5
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT [G]				
69% of Worcester schools will meet or exceed state learning targets based on MCAS[H]	**49%**	**56%**	**62%**	**69%**
Increase the number of schools demonstrating or maintaining an SGP in ELA higher than state median 50%	50%	50.33%	50.67%	51%
Increase the number of schools demonstrating or maintaining an SGP in Math to higher than state median 50%	49%	49.33%	49.67%	50%
100 % of top performing schools maintain their performance Level	9 schools	9 schools (Minimum)	9 schools	9 schools
100% of building leaders participate in Principal Academy	n/a	25%	45%	100%
ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE				
Increase overall district progress in reducing proficiency gap to 75 % in English Language Arts and Math	50%	58%	67%	75%
47% of 3rd Grade students will meet or exceed benchmarks on English Language Arts MCAS	**31%**	**36%**	**41%**	**47%**
49% of 3rd Grade students will meet or exceed benchmarks on Math MCAS	**29%**	**36%**	**42%**	**49%**
49 % of 8th Grade students will meet or exceed benchmarks on English Language Arts MCAS	33%	38%	44%	49%
46 % of 8th Grade students will meet or exceed benchmarks on Math MCAS	25%	32%	39%	46%
100% Percent of 12th graders enroll and pass a college or career success activity prior to graduation (e.g. AP, dual enrollment, internship)	n/a	80%	90%	100%
100% can engage in a student digital learning experience (e.g., course or skill building activity in K-5)	**30%**	**53%**	**76%**	**100%**
WELCOMING SCHOOLS				
Reduce chronic absenteeism to 13.5% for students	**16.9%**	**15.8%**	**14.6%**	**13.5%**

[G] Benchmarks for strategies listed in the culture of innovation section are reflected here as school improvement. This allows a focus on a critical goal for Worcester, improvement of the schools and acknowledges the innovative practices infused throughout all sections.

	71%	61%	51%	41%
Reduce number of youth disciplined for non-drug, non-violent, and non-criminal offenses by 30%	**71%**	**61%**	**51%**	**41%**
Reduce number of students suspended for non-drug, non-violent, and non-criminal offenses by 1/3rd districtwide	**4.8%**	**4.48%**	**3.84%**	**3.2%**
Reduce number of students suspended for non-drug, non-violent, and non-criminal offenses by 1/3rd in each subgroup	Shown Below			
English Language Learners	4.7%	4.4%	3.8%	3.1%
Economically disadvantaged	6.1%	5.7%	4.9%	4.1%
Students w/disabilities	10.4%	9.7%	8.3%	7.0%
High needs	5.5%	5.1%	4.4%	3.7%
American Indian or Alaska Native	11.4%	10.6%	9.1%	7.6%
Asian	.7%	0.7%	0.6%	0.5%
African American/Black	4.8%	4.5%	3.8%	3.2%
Hispanic/Latino	6.7%	6.3%	5.4%	4.5%
Multi-race, Non-Hispanic/Latino	6.6%	6.2%	5.3%	4.4%
White	3.1%	2.9%	2.5%	2.1%
100% of student engage in social and emotional support initiatives by graduation	N/A	33%	75%	100%
Reduce dropout rate to 1.8	2.2%	2%	1.93%	1.8%
By 2023 all schools have a parent liaison trained in parent engagement best practices	20%	46%	72%	100%
75% of schools have an active Site Council with participation representative of the school community	10%	32%	57%	75%
80% of families' report using student information and communication vehicles	n/a	26%	52%	80%

EDUCATORS				
100% of Educator Proficient or Higher on Evaluation	97.4	97.6	98.1%	98.5%
Increase diversity of new hires by 25%	**n/a**	**8%**	**17%**	**25%**
80% of district and school level professional development opportunities align with strategic plan training areas	n/a	27%	53%	80%
50% of educators earn continuing education credits in priority areas of strategic plan	n/a	17%	33%	50%
80% of educator's report application of practices aligned with training area	n/a	27%	53%	80%
80% of all leadership and educators will report that they have proficiency in the ISTE standards.	n/a	26%	52%	80%
OPERATIONS				
100% of school committee meetings are guided by a consent agenda supported by mayor and superintendent	n/a	33%	75%	100%
Increase participation of the community in existing governance meetings by 40%	n/a	13%	26%	40%
Increase Per Pupil Expenditure to state average (8%)	**n/a**	**3%**	**5%**	**8%**
Increase the revenue from in-kind or financial contributions within the community by 20%	n/a	6%	13%	20%

100% of students have a Personalized Learning Plan	n/a	20%	50%	100%
100% of high schools provide course offerings meeting all requirements of MassCORE	n/a	33%	75%	100%
Increase available spaces for advanced learning initiatives by 25%	n/a	8.3%	16.6 %	25%
Increase available internships by 25%	n/a	8.3%	16.6 %	25%
Development of districtwide policy and procedures manual that outlines EWIS, school data teams, and MTSS	n/a	100%		
100% of schools collect data using district school climate measures	n/a	25%	50%	100%
100% of schools collect data and report on social emotional learning	n/a	25%	50%	100%
75% of schools will use a multitiered system of support for both academic and behavior intervention	n/a	n/a (design year)	30%	75%
System wide review and training program for classroom management practices for equitable behavioral outcomes launched		50%	100%	
80% of grade level teams routinely use EWIS data to proactively identify students at risk	n/a	20%	40%	80%
Implement positive supports for teacher wellness and attendance in all schools	n/a	30	70	100%
Enhanced communication process and system implemented (website, contact protocols, identification of student system vendor)	n/a	50%	100%	
100% of students are educated in technology enabled classroom	20%	46%	72%	100%
Development of districtwide policy and procedures manual for technology use and operations	n/a	100%		
Quarterly policy discussions are held in the community and within school committee	n/a	100%		
Establishment of a standing joint committee of city and school district leaders	n/a	100%		
Development of a funding campaign which engages community and policy leaders	n/a	100%		