The Research Bureau

Strategizing for Excellence

Status of the Worcester Public Schools Strategic Plan

Report 22-08

December 2022

Research in the Public Interest

In Collaboration With

Worcester Education Collaborative

Introduction

In September of 2018, the Worcester School Committee adopted *Defining our Path: A Strategic Plan for Education in Worcester 2018-2023*, the first strategic plan adopted in 26 years at Worcester Public Schools (WPS). The strategic planning initiative was led by Worcester Education Collaborative (WEC) and Worcester Regional Research Bureau (WRRB) in collaboration with WPS and facilitated by the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy funded through a grant by the Barr Foundation. The process engaged individuals from across the community and was guided by three major bodies: a Coordinating Committee, an Advisory Committee, and five Sub-Committees on each specific focus area. The Focus Areas framed the strategic plan and identified a series of objectives and strategies. A full copy of the strategic plan is available: https://worcesterschools.org/about/superintendent/wps-strategic-plan/.

The five Sub-Committees, in concert with WPS, determined metrics to track the progress of the strategic plan implementation. However, COVID-19 presented a significant disruption to the education system. School districts across the country, including WPS, grappled with the sudden shift to online education. Despite these disruptions, WPS has made and continues to make investments in the Strategic Plan's Focus Areas as seen in Chart 1. These investments are outlined in detail in WPS' Annual Budget. Still, much of the data meant to track this progress is not available publicly, has not been collected, or has been significantly impacted by the pandemic. Comparisons, therefore, between the Plan's adoption and the most recent year for which data is available, 2021, will not be complete.

As the term of the Strategic Plan nears its end, with a new Superintendent, School Committee transitions, and circumstances presented by the pandemic, WPS must develop its next iteration, learning lessons from the development and implementation of *Defining our Path*. The District must create mechanisms to measure success, collecting data from the outset, and communicate with the community throughout the process. This report will explore the available data as WPS begins to develop its new Plan.

Vision

- 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:
  o fosters innovation in schools;
  o provides vital supports for teaching and learning;
  o ensures access to modern technology;
  o develops the critical thinking and technical skills of all students;
  o 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**
  o All students will have access to high quality learning experiences which leverage effective approaches
- **Academic Excellence**
  o All students will have access to rigorous and personalized learning supported by technology
- **Welcoming Schools**
  o All students will 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
- **Investment in Educators**
  o All students will be supported by effective educators who demonstrate leadership and commitment to enhancing student learning and development
- **Technology & Operations**
  o All students will learn in an efficient and fiscally sound district

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

Sub-Committees
50 Members

- Five groups with approximately 10 participants each, including parents, recent students, educators, and community members reviewed district data, prioritized challenges, and developed strategy recommendations within specific focus areas.
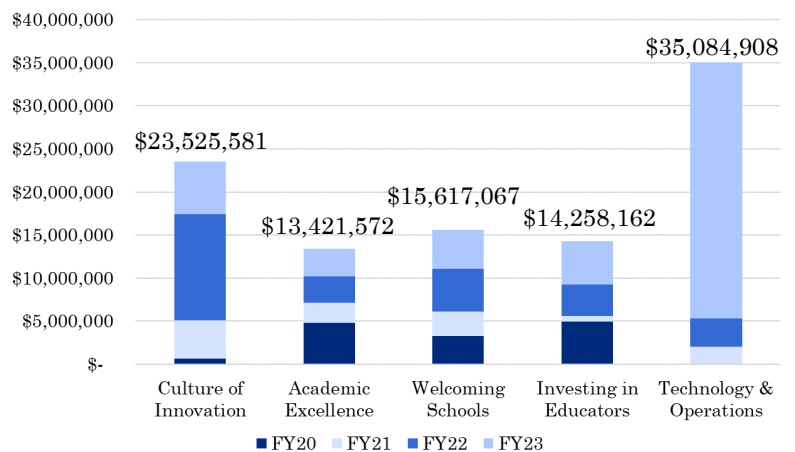
Advisory Committee
50 Members

- Parents, educators, School Committee, and community, city and university leaders met monthly to investigate challenges facing the district and wigh in on strategies for improving WPS.

Source: Defining Our Path: A Strategic Plan for Education in Worcester, 2018-2023

Chart 1: Funding by Focus Area, FY20—FY23

Source: Worcester Public Schools Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Annual Budget

💡 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. 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.

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. Worcester has undertaken numerous initiatives to support the needs of students, with localized success. To see system-wide 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.

Worcester Public Schools Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Annual Budget

Funding

The Worcester Public Schools invested approximately $23.5 million toward the Culture of Innovation Focus Area from FY20-FY23. A significant portion of this funding, over $13 million, was budgeted for Learning Loss Summer School & School Year Programs which began in FY22 as a direct result of COVID-19. The remaining funds were distributed across a range of line items, such as additional staff and instructional materials.

Chart 2: Funding by Culture of Innovation Objective, FY20—FY23
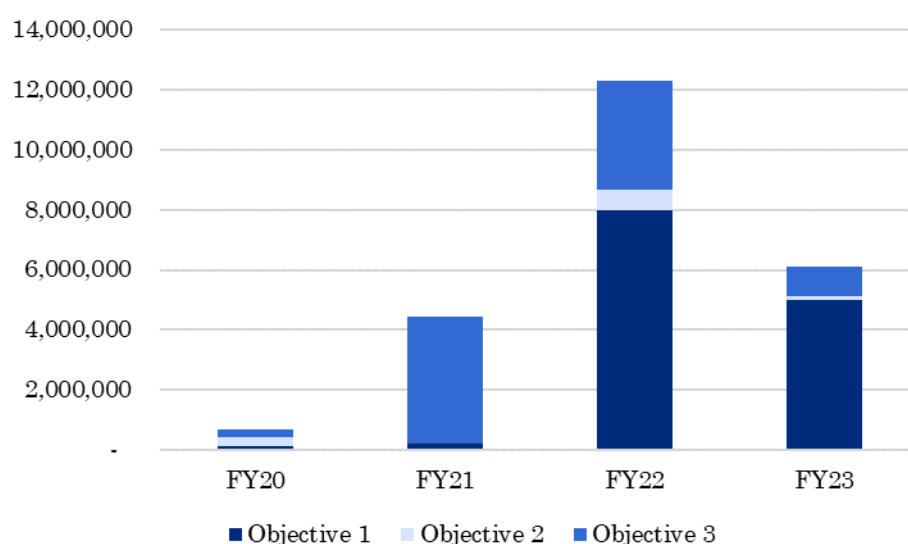
Source: Worcester Public Schools Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Annual Budget

CULTURE OF INNOVATION - FUNDING, FY20-FY23					
	FY20	**FY21**	**FY22**	**FY23**	**Total**
Objective 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	$104,000	$190,000	$8,000,000	$5,000,000	$13,294,000
Objective 2: Increase the capacity of school leadership to leverage existing resources for school improvement	$317,000		$663,880	$112,182	$1,093,062
Objective 3: Identify demonstrated best practices regionally and across the globe that can be adapted to Worcester's unique conditions to alleviate achievement gaps	$251,100	4,265,772	$3,632,903	$988,744	$9,138,519
Total	$672,100	$4,455,772	$12,296,783	$6,100,926	***$23,525,581***

Source: Worcester Public Schools Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Annual Budget

Culture of Innovation

Benchmarks

Despite funding this area, much of the data for this Focus Area has been too impacted by the pandemic to evaluate effectively. SGP is an acronym for Student Growth Percentiles which is used to measure the degree by which a student's achievement has changed from one year to the next. The measurement below represents the percent of schools that maintained, or increased, SGP in particular subjects. It is clear that COVID-19 had significant effects on this benchmark and will need to be monitored closely.

CULTURE OF INNOVATION - BENCHMARKING, 2018-2023					
		2018	**2019**	**2021**	**2023**
Reduce number of schools performing at or below the 10th percentile statewide	Benchmark	10 schools	9 schools	7 schools	5 schools
	Actual	10 schools	10 schools	Not Issued by DESE	
Increase the number of schools demonstrating or maintaining an SGP in ELA higher than state median 50%	Benchmark	50%	50.33%	50.67%	51%
	Actual	50%	52.1%	6.5%*	
Increase the number of schools demonstrating or maintaining an SGP in Math to higher than state median 50%	Benchmark	49%	49.33%	49.67%	50%
	Actual	54%	60.9%	2.2%*	
100 % of top-performing schools maintain their performance levels on state-designated metrics	Benchmark	9 schools	9 schools	9 schools	9 schools
	Actual	9 schools	9 schools	Not Issued by DESE	
100% of building leaders participate in Principal Academy	Benchmark	N/A	25%	45%	100%
	Actual	N/A	N/A	N/A	

*MCAS Spring 2020 was not administered and Spring 2021 was administered remotely or in-person
Source: Defining Our Path: A Strategic Plan for Education in Worcester, 2018-2023; Worcester Public Schools

Academic Excellence

As the second-largest school district in the state, Worcester Public Schools makes an important contribution in equipping today's students with knowledge and skills to become tomorrow's engaged community and productive workforce. 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 post-secondary opportunity. Also, it must equip students with the digital skills necessary for success in the modern workplace.
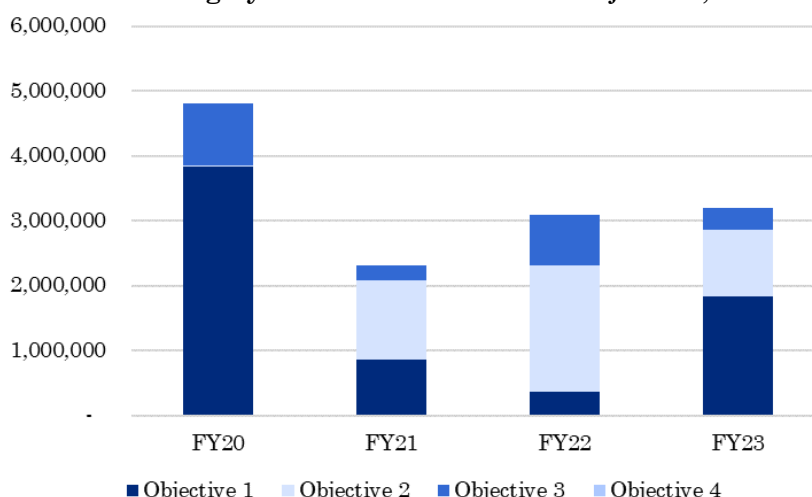
Academic excellence starts with universal access to the learning environment and a focus on foundational skills at the elementary level. This ensures that essential building blocks for knowledge are well established, laying the groundwork for more advanced courses in later years. Given the importance 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 support for students' college or career aspirations.

Worcester Public Schools Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Annual Budget

Funding

Items funded under this Focus Area include Innovation Pathways, instructional staff, curriculum materials, and Chromebooks. This investment, a necessity made even more urgent by the pandemic, enabled WPS to become a 1:1 device district. WPS maintains over 30,000 Chromebooks, 6,000 iPads, and 1,000 desktop computers. This investment will need to be addressed long term, with 22,664 Chromebooks with students, 6,163 on reserve, 3,300 in repair queue, 300 beyond repair, and 2,563 unaccounted for. WPS estimates this loss at approximately

Chart 3: Funding by Academic Excellence Objective, FY20—FY23

Source: Worcester Public Schools Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Annual Budget

$1 Million. There must be long-term plans to ensure this investment in academic excellence can continue.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE - FUNDING, FY20-FY23					
	FY20	**FY21**	**FY22**	**FY23**	**Total**
Objective 1: Increase opportunities for students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills and demonstrate knowledge	$3,830,950	$863,725	$365,204	$1,836,665	$6,896,544
Objective 2: Develop students' technology fluency and ensure access to digital learning and computer science (DLCS) curricula	$19,300	$1,208,987	$1,949,220	$1,020,000	$4,197,507
Objective 3: Increase career awareness and exploration at all grade levels through integrated coursework and a tiered career learning program	$961,950	$241,329	$779,457	$344,785	$2,327,521
Objective 4: Leverage Worcester's distinct community assets to increase choices in learning options and academic support through partnerships with higher education and community organizations					
Total	$4,812,200	$2,314,041	$3,093,881	$3,201,450	***$13,421,572***

Source: Worcester Public Schools Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Annual Budget

Academic Excellence

Benchmarks

Metrics used to measure the effectiveness of these programs were largely benchmarks for MCAS scores. Many of these categories (3rd grade ELA, 3rd grade Math, and 8th grade ELA) were beginning to trend upward in 2019. However, MCAS was not administered in 2020 and it was administered both remotely and in-person in spring, 2021. This interruption can be seen in the 2021 numbers. An additional metric that should be noted regards digital learning experiences. The School Administration tracked individual courses (those with keywords "digital" or "technology") and participation rates were only at 53% despite the benchmark of 76%; however, more than 98% of students accessed the Clever platform for education technology applications for learning.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE - BENCHMARKING, 2018-2023		2018	2019	2021	2023
Reduce proficiency gap to 75% in English Language Arts and Math	Benchmark	50%	58%	67%	75%
	Actual	N/A	N/A	N/A	
47% of 3rd Grade students will meet or exceed benchmarks on English Language Arts MCAS	Benchmark	31%	36%	41%	47%
	Actual	31%	37%	31%*	
49% of 3rd Grade students will meet or exceed benchmarks on Math MCAS	Benchmark	29%	36%	42%	49%
	Actual	29%	30%	15%*	
49% of 8th Grade students will meet or exceed benchmarks on English Language Arts MCAS	Benchmark	33%	38%	44%	49%
	Actual	33%	34%	22%*	
46% of 8th Grade students will meet or exceed benchmarks on Math MCAS	Benchmark	25%	32%	39%	46%
	Actual	23%	23%	13%*	
100% of 12th graders enroll and pass a college or career success activity prior to graduation	Benchmark	N/A	80%	90%	100%
	Actual	TBD	N/A	N/A	
100% of students can engage in a digital learning experience (e.g., course or skill building activity in K-5)	Benchmark	30%	53%	76%	100%
	Actual (edtech exp)**	N/A	N/A	98%	
	Actual (course exp)***	13%	55%	53%	

MCAS administration was both remote and in-person. MCAS was not administered in 2020.
**Education technology experience reflects the percentage of students using Clever to access education technology applications and platforms for learning. Tracking of this metric began in SY20 in the Clever platform*
***Course Experience reflects K-12 students taking any course that contains keywords such as digital or technology*
Source: Defining Our Path: A Strategic Plan for Education in Worcester, 2018-2023; Worcester Public Schools

♥ **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.

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, and enhancing wraparound supports. As Worcester is a community rich in the ethnic and cultural diversity that characterizes our increasingly globalized world, each school will develop, as a part of its accountability plan, a program for ensuring cultural competence among the staff consistent with its student population. 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.

Worcester Public Schools Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Annual Budget

Funding

Worcester Public Schools has hired over 200 positions under this Focus Area, notably 97 special education educators, 19 school adjustment counselors, 15 wrap-around coordinators, and more. Additionally, over $1 million was spent in parent and family engagement through line items such as a Parent Liaison, WooEdu (new Student Information System), adult education programs, and culture surveys.

Chart 4: Funding by Welcoming Schools Objective, FY20—FY23
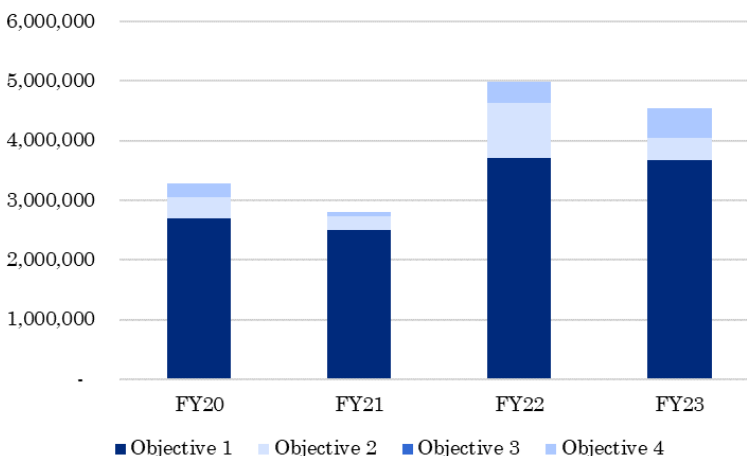
Source: Worcester Public Schools Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Annual Budget

WELCOMING SCHOOLS - FUNDING, FY20-FY23					
	FY20	**FY21**	**FY22**	**FY23**	**Total**
Objective 1: Prioritize the development of systems that support a shared vision for social and emotional development across the district	$2,700,400	$2,493,589	$3,710,470	$3,669,319	$12,573,778
Objective 2: Implement a comprehensive, district-wide approach to monitoring and measuring social and emotional growth and school climate	$349,900	$231,170	$924,588	$370,744	$1,876,402
Objective 3: Foster and monitor positive school climate through the articulation of shared values/ goals and implementation of effective practices in schools					
Objective 4: Increase opportunities for family engagement and participation in decision making at the school level	$232,300	$78,395	$347,168	$509,024	$1,166,887
Total	$3,282,600	$2,803,154	$4,982,226	$4,549,087	*$15,617,067*

Source: Worcester Public Schools Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Annual Budget

💙 **Welcoming Schools**

Benchmarks

It is significant to note that the pandemic had a serious impact on the data identified to measure the effectiveness of programming under Welcoming Schools. WPS has made progress on dropout rates (surpassing benchmarks) and on chronic absenteeism (not quite reaching benchmark); however, a large portion of the Strategic Plan's term has been during remote or hybrid learning which will have impacted data from 2021.

When comparing pre-pandemic data to the available data on discipline, the table on the next page shows that progress has been made among all students and student subgroups (English Language Learners, economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, high needs, and racial and ethnic subgroups). However, data from 2021 have been drastically affected by the pandemic, especially as many students were not present in physical school buildings or in a hybrid-capacity. Additional data will be required.

WELCOMING SCHOOLS - BENCHMARKING, 2018-2023		2018	2019	2021	2023
Reduce chronic absenteeism to 13.5% for students	Benchmark	16.9%	15.8%	14.6%	13.5%
	Actual	17%	15%	15%	
100% of student engage in social and emotional support initiatives by graduation	Benchmark	N/A	33%	75%	100%
	Actual	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Reduce dropout rate to 1.8%	Benchmark	2.2%	2%	1.93%	1.80%
	Actual	2.3%	2.60%	1.1%	
By 2023 all schools have a parent liaison trained in parent engagement best practices*	Benchmark	20%	46%	72%	100%
	Actual	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Increase the number of schools with an active site council representative of the school community by 50%**	Benchmark	0	10%	30%	50%
	Actual	N/A	N/A	N/A	
80% of families report using student information and communication vehicles	Benchmark	N/A	26%	52%	80%
	Actual	N/A	N/A	N/A	

Model changed. WPS are increasing Wrap-around coordinators.
**All schools have school site councils.*
Source: Defining Our Path: A Strategic Plan for Education in Worcester, 2018-2023; Worcester Public Schools

💙 Welcoming Schools Continued

WELCOMING SCHOOLS - BENCHMARKING CONTINUED, 2018-2023		2018	2019	2021	2023
Reduce number of youth disciplined for non-drug, non-violent, and non-criminal offenses by 30%	Benchmark	71%	61%	51%	41%
	Actual	71%	57%	32%	
Reduce percentage of students suspended for non-drug, non-violent, and non-criminal offenses by one-third districtwide	Benchmark	4.8%	4.48%	3.84%	3.2%
	Actual	4.8%	3.7%	0.0%	
Reduce number of students suspended for non-drug, non-violent, and non-criminal offenses by one-third in each subgroup	Shown Below				
English Language Learners	Benchmark	4.7%	4.4%	3.8%	3.1%
	Actual	4.7%	3.1%	0.1%	
Economically disadvantaged	Benchmark	6.1%	5.7%	4.9%	4.1%
	Actual	6.1%	4.5%	0.0%	
Students w/ disabilities	Benchmark	10.4%	9.7%	8.3%	7.0%
	Actual	10.4%	7.5%	0.1%	
High needs	Benchmark	5.5%	5.1%	4.4%	3.7%
	Actual	5.5%	4.0%	0.0%	
American Indian or Alaska Native	Benchmark	11.4%	10.6%	9.1%	7.6%
	Actual	11.4%	not reported	not reported	
Asian	Benchmark	0.7%	0.7%	0.6%	0.5%
	Actual	0.7%	0.6%	not reported	
African American/Black	Benchmark	4.8%	4.5%	3.8%	3.2%
	Actual	4.8%	3.8%	not reported	
Hispanic/Latino	Benchmark	6.7%	6.3%	5.4%	4.5%
	Actual	6.7%	4.7%	0.0%	
Multi-race, Non-Hispanic/Latino	Benchmark	6.6%	6.2%	5.3%	4.4%
	Actual	6.6%	5.1%	not reported	
White	Benchmark	3.1%	2.9%	2.5%	2.1%
	Actual	3.1%	2.5%	not reported	

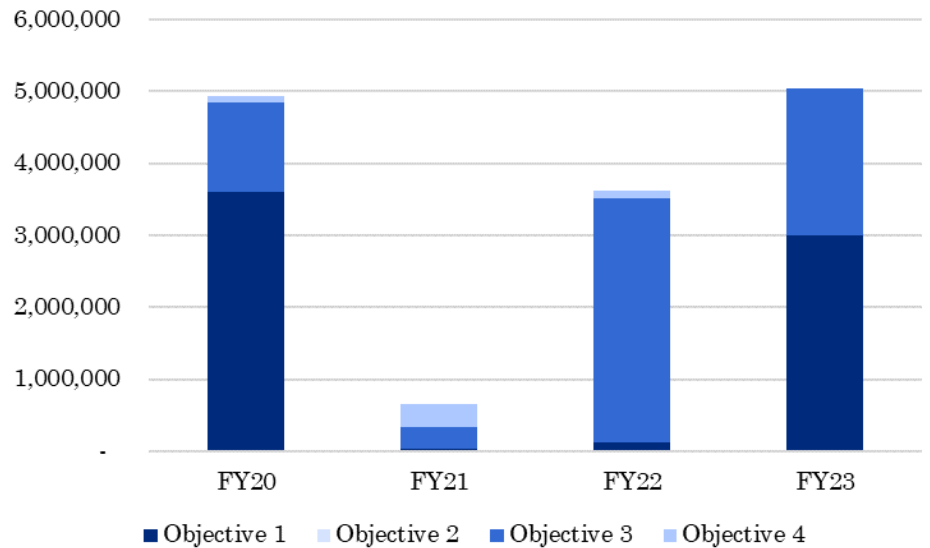*Source: Defining Our Path: A Strategic Plan for Education in Worcester, 2018-2023; Worcester Public Schools*

Objective, FY20—FY23Chart 5: Funding by Investing in Educators Objective, FY20—FY23

Source: Worcester Public Schools Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Annual Budget

INVESTING IN EDUCATORS - FUNDING, FY20-FY23					
	FY20	**FY21**	**FY22**	**FY23**	**Total**
Objective 1: Review teacher recruitment and retention approach and implement strategies that will increase access to a highly qualified, diverse teacher workforce	$3,598,560	$28,000	$112,330	$3,000,161	$6,739,051
Objective 2: Provide pathways for educators to demonstrate mastery and advance in their professional development					
Objective 3: Increase educator capacity to provide high-quality instruction and address student needs by offering diverse professional development opportunities and positive supports	$1,250,500	$311,275	$3,396,484	$2,040,992	$6,999,251
Objective 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	$90,300	$319,560	$110,000		$519,860
Total	$4,939,360	$658,835	$3,618,814	$5,041,153	*$14,258,162*

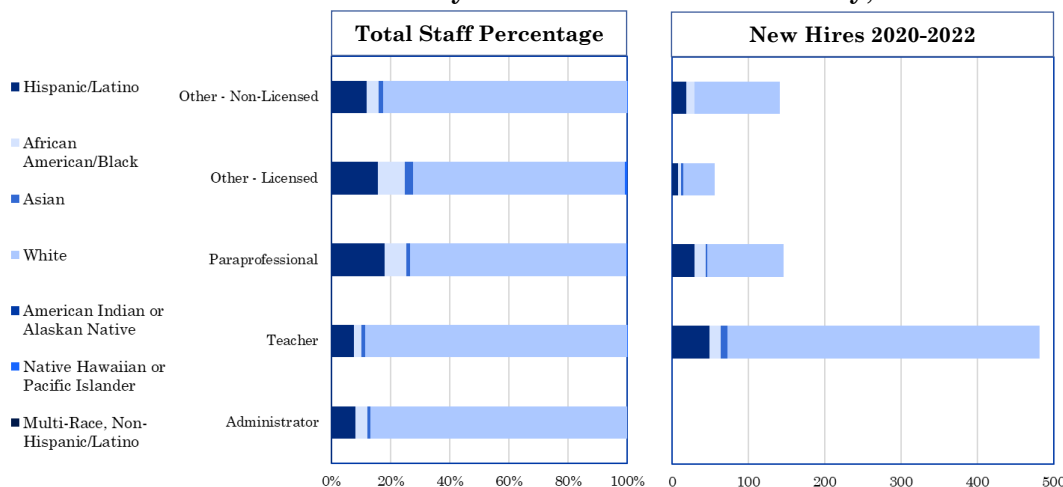Source: Worcester Public Schools Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Annual Budget

Investing in Educators

Benchmarks

Metrics for this focus area are generally not available as identified in the strategic plan with the exception of new hire diversity which increased approximately 13.8% from 2018-2021, slightly behind the benchmark of 17%. It is important to note that 100% of WPS educators earn professional development points and a School Year 2022 survey of leadership and educators, measured proficiency on 6 of 7 ISTE standards. ISTE Educator Standards prepare educators for the use of technology in the learning process and identify seven roles a teacher must fulfill: Learner, Leader, Citizen, Collaborator, Designer, Facilitator, Analyst.

Chart 6: Number of New Hires by Profession & Race/Ethnicity, FY20—FY23

Legend:
- Hispanic/Latino
- African American/Black
- Asian
- White
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic/Latino

Total Staff Percentage *Number of New Hires (2020-2022)*	Hispanic/Latino	African American/Black	Asian	White	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic/Latino
Administrator	**8.2%** *0*	**3.9%** *0*	**1.2%** *0*	**86.8%** *0*	**0.0%** *0*	**0.0%** *0*	**0.0%** *0*
Teacher	**7.6%** *49*	**2.5%** *15*	**1.4%** *9*	**88.4%** *408*	**0.0%** *0*	**0.1%** *0*	**0.0%** *0*
Paraprofessional	**18.0%** *29*	**7.2%** *15*	**1.4%** *2*	**73.1%** *100*	**0.0%** *0*	**0.3%** *0*	**0.0%** *0*
Other - Licensed	**15.7%** *8*	**9.2%** *4*	**2.8%** *3*	**71.5%** *41*	**0.0%** *0*	**0.8%** *0*	**0.0%** *0*
Other - Non-Licensed	**11.9%** *19*	**4.1%** *10*	**1.4%** *0*	**82.5%** *112*	**0.0%** *0*	**0.1%** *0*	**0.0%** *0*

Source: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

INVESTING IN EDUCATORS - BENCHMARKING, 2018-2023		**2018**	**2019**	**2021**	**2023**
100% of educators proficient or higher on evaluation	Benchmark	97.4%	97.6%	98.1%	98.5%
	Actual	96.9%	97.5%	N/A	
Increase diversity of new hires by 25%	Benchmark	N/A	8%	17%	25%
	Actual	N/A	25.5%	13.8%	
80% of district- and school- level professional development opportunities align with strategic plan training areas	Benchmark	N/A	27%	53%	80%
	Actual	N/A	N/A	N/A	
50% of educators earn continuing education credits in priority areas of strategic plan*	Benchmark	N/A	17%	33%	50%
	Actual	N/A	N/A	N/A	
80% of educators report application of practices aligned with training area**	Benchmark	N/A	27%	53%	80%
	Actual	N/A	N/A	N/A	
80% of all leadership and educators will report that they have proficiency in the ISTE standards***	Benchmark	N/A	26%	52%	80%
	Actual	N/A	N/A	N/A	

*100% of educators earn professional development points

**100% of educators earn professional development points based on demonstration of application of learning

***BrightBytes survey administered in SY22: Leadership & Educators were proficient on 6 of 7 ISTE standards

Source: Defining Our Path: A Strategic Plan for Education in Worcester, 2018-2023; Worcester Public Schools

🐷💲 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.

Worcester Public Schools Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Annual Budget

Funding

The Worcester Public Schools made significant strides to accomplish the objectives laid out in this Focus Area. As illustrated by Chart 1, Technology & Operations received the most significant concentrated investment at $35 million. Approximately $8.5 million dollars were invested in the replacement of ventilation systems in FY23 with an additional $10 million expected in FY24 through ESSER funds. An additional $1 million per year will be needed to maintain these capital investments. Furthermore, WPS budgeted approximately $16.5 million for the shift to a district-

Chart 7: Funding by Technology & Operations Objective, FY20—FY23
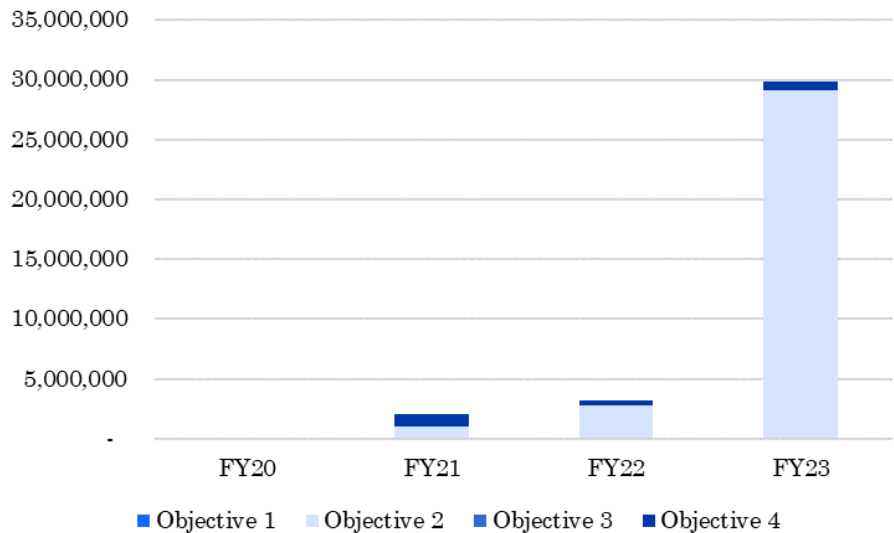
Source: Worcester Public Schools Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Annual Budget

operated bus system, however it is estimated that the District will save approximately $4 million a year for the next 10 years over the projected costs for contracted service.

TECHNOLOGY & OPERATIONS - FUNDING, FY20-FY23					
	FY20	**FY21**	**FY22**	**FY23**	**Total**
Objective 1: Coordinate and align school administration, governance, and municipal processes to prioritize and support educational improvements for the success of all students					
Objective 2: Identify and establish support for financial strategies that enhance and scale improvements with demonstrated effectiveness		$1,080,257	$2,817,313	$29,148,590	$33,046,160
Objective 3: Establish a strategic communication and outreach approach that promotes district opportunities and establishes Worcester as a leader in urban education					
Objective 4: Establish the infrastructure necessary to support technology access and integration across the district		$956,000	$429,000	$653,748	$2,038,748
Total		$2,036,257	$3,246,313	$29,802,338	*$35,084,908*

Source: Worcester Public Schools Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Annual Budget

🐷 **Technology & Operations**

Benchmarks

The only metric that has been tracked for this Focus Area has been per-pupil expenditure which has significantly surpassed benchmarks, increasing from $14,468 in 2018 to $17,316 in 2021. While other metrics are not available, two significant accomplishments have been made in this area. The first is the passage of the Student Opportunity Act which successfully increased the foundation budget, phasing in approximately $90 million by 2027. This, along with COVID-related federal funds, has had a direct impact on per-pupil expenditure, as seen below. The second, not captured in the data yet, is the shift to consent agendas for 100% of School Committee meetings which was accomplished in 2022.

TECHNOLOGY & OPERATIONS - BENCHMARKING, 2018-2023					
		2018	**2019**	**2021**	**2023**
100% of School Committee meetings are guided by a consent agenda supported by Mayor and Superintendent*	Benchmark	N/A	33%	75%	100%
	Actual	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Increase participation of the community in existing governance meetings by 40%	Benchmark	N/A	13%	26%	40%
	Actual	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Increase per-pupil expenditure by 20%	Benchmark	N/A	4%	12%	20%
	Actual	N/A	4.4%	19.7%	
Increase the revenue from in-kind or financial contributions within the community by 20%	Benchmark	N/A	6%	13%	20%
	Actual	N/A	N/A	N/A	

*As of January 2022, 100% of the School Committee meetings are guided by a consent agenda supported by the Vice Chair and Superintendent
Sources: Defining Our Path: A Strategic Plan for Education in Worcester, 2018-2023; Worcester Public Schools; Department of Elementary & Secondary Education

Conclusion & Next Steps

Defining Our Path: A Strategic Plan for Education in Worcester has guided the Worcester Public Schools since 2018. Since then, WPS has made significant investments in the Strategic Plan's Focus Areas towards accomplishing the objectives laid out in the plan.

Despite these investments, much of the data to effectively evaluate the implementation of the Strategic Plan has not been collected, is not available, or has been too severely impacted by the pandemic to use with accuracy. As WPS approaches the end of the five years envisioned in *Defining our Path,* the Worcester School Committee, particularly the Standing Committee on Governance & Employee Issues, has been working with the WPS Administration to evaluate the current Plan and begin planning for the new Strategic Plan.

In April of 2022, the Worcester School Committee appointed Dr. Rachel H. Monárrez to serve as Superintendent of the Worcester Public Schools, effective July 1, 2022. Since that time, Superintendent Monárrez developed a comprehensive entry plan themed around chapters, as seen below. The Superintendent has expressed that the Strategic Plan is a critical component of WPS' future, and she intends to work with the Worcester School Committee to develop its next iteration. The Superintendent, along with the School Committee, is forming the foundation of the next strategic plan through listening sessions, in-office experience, and data analysis. Much of this process will take place beginning in the first quarter of 2023, although preliminary efforts are already underway.

The updated strategic plan must take into account the successes of *Defining Our Path*, while simultaneously addressing areas of concern. Given the recognized impacts of the pandemic on student well-being and academic achievement, WPS should:

The Foreword: Power of Connections, Words, Images	• The theme of communication is two fold, gather or share information. Ensuring accurate information is available requires multiple modes of communicating.
Chapter 1: Immersion into the Worcester Community	• Immersion and gatherings is the theme of this chapter. The purpose of the gathers will be to foster relationships, ensure visibility, share her educational philosophy and core values while learning about the dreams and desires of Worcester Public Schools stakeholders.
Chapter 2: Listening to Learn	• Listening to learn is essential to understanding WPS. The theme of this chapter is to gather focused information from internal and external stakeholders while continuing to nurture relationships and valuing traditions and successes of the past.
Chapter 3: Learning in Action	• Taking time to see work in action is crucial. The theme of this chapter is to gather real-time data, learning in action, and triangulate the information collected through the structured gatherings and the document review.
Chapter 4: Analysis and Sharing	• Analysis and reporting trends is the reason for the entry plan. The theme of this chapter will be an interactive process where the School Committee provides input and guidance preparing the Worcester Public Schools to refine and outline a strategic plan for the next five years.
Chapter 5: Crafting the Future Story of WPS, Together	• The vast amount of data gathered will set the stage for next steps. The theme of this chapter will be the development of a refined strategic plan that will take WPS into the future.

Source: Worcester Public Schools, Superintendent's Entry

- Consider strategies fostering equitable student outcomes.
- Integrate the strategic plan into the culture of the district at all levels to ensure meaningful progress.
- Implement mechanisms to measure accurate and continuous data, establishing baselines during the first school year, and collecting ongoing data.
- Establish regular timeframes to measure and report on the progress, and impact, of strategies and objectives to the Worcester School Committee with online resources for the community.
- Make regular updates to, and prioritization of, the strategies to maximize the impact of investments.
- Engage with all facets of the community during the development, and implementation, of the next Strategic Plan with clear and accessible opportunities.

Worcester Regional Research Bureau, Inc.