



# Operational Audit of Methuen Public Schools

City of Methuen, MA

September 26, 2025

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## Project Overview and Approach

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The City of Methuen, Massachusetts ("Methuen" or the "City") engaged CBIZ ("CBIZ" or "We") to conduct an Operational Audit and Culture Assessment of the Methuen Public Schools ("MPS" or "Schools"). The objective of this project was to examine and assess the current management practices within MPS. This review encompassed key areas such as district culture, organizational structure, leadership and governance, hiring and retention processes, stakeholder engagement, and other essential operational aspects considered non-financial in nature.

This report outlines the themes, observations, and recommendations resulting from our assessment of current management practices within MPS. See below for additional information on the key areas included:

- **District Culture:** Evaluation of the existing organizational climate and values influencing employee engagement and performance.
- **Organizational Structure:** Analysis of reporting lines, roles, and responsibilities to determine operational efficiency and effectiveness.
- **Leadership and Governance:** Assessment of leadership practices, decision-making processes, and governance frameworks supporting strategic objectives.
- **Hiring and Retention:** Review of recruitment, hiring, and retention strategies to ensure alignment with organizational needs.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Examination of communication and collaboration with internal and external stakeholders to support transparency and inclusion.
- **Other Non-Financial Operational Aspects:** Assessment of additional areas critical to organizational success that are non-financial in nature.

## Project Overview and Approach, continued

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To achieve the objectives of this operational audit, we employed a collaborative approach designed to gather qualitative and quantitative insights from a broad range of stakeholders and to place our findings in context with peer institutions. Our approach included the following key steps:

- **Stakeholder Interviews:** We conducted multiple interviews with key stakeholders, including school district leadership, school administrators, selected board members, parents, students (grades 5th through 12th), and current and former staff members. These interviews enabled us to gain in-depth perspectives on current practices, strategic priorities, and operational challenges.
- **Surveys:** We administered tailored surveys to staff, students, and parents across the district. These surveys were designed to assess perceptions, satisfaction levels, and gather feedback on specific processes and areas of focus. The survey data provided a broad-based understanding of stakeholder experiences and expectations.
- **Benchmarking Analysis:** We performed a benchmarking analysis by comparing the school district's processes, performance indicators, and outcomes with those of ten comparable public school districts. These peer districts were selected based on factors such as student enrollment size, demographics, and geographic location. The benchmarking allowed us to identify leading practices, highlight areas for improvement, and position our findings within a broader educational context.

## Strengths Identified

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Acknowledging and building upon strengths is just as important as identifying areas for growth. Positive feedback from MPS students, staff, and families reflects the dedication, creativity, and commitment that define the school community. The following highlights showcase the accomplishments, supportive relationships, and effective practices that are making a meaningful difference at MPS, providing a strong foundation for continued success and improvement.

- **Dedicated and Caring Teachers and Staff:** Many respondents express gratitude for teachers' and support staff's commitment, kindness, and efforts to foster positive student relationships and provide individualized attention.
- **Strong Sense of Community:** Families and students appreciate the welcoming, community-oriented environment at several schools, noting that staff know students by name and make families feel included.
- **Strong Early Childhood and Primary Education Foundations:** Several families with young children praise the Early Childhood Center and grammar schools for nurturing, developmentally appropriate programs and caring educators.
- **Celebration of Diversity and Inclusion:** There are positive mentions of schools acknowledging and celebrating students' diverse backgrounds, including multicultural events and support for English Language Learners (ELLs).
- **Clear Academic Expectations and Rigor:** Some parents and students value clear academic standards, challenging coursework, and the preparation students receive for the next grade or postsecondary plans.

While MPS is noted by stakeholders for these positive sentiments, opportunities exist for improvement.

## Assessment Summary

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CBIZ was engaged by the City of Methuen to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the district's management practices, organizational culture, leadership, stakeholder engagement, and operational effectiveness. The assessment was derived from stakeholder interviews, district-wide surveys, and benchmarking against peer districts to identify strengths, challenges, and actionable recommendations.

Our observations reveal significant variation in school culture across the district, with some schools reporting positive environments and others facing high stress, low morale, and disengagement. Staff and stakeholders frequently cited concerns regarding administrative responsiveness, reports of high turnover, insufficient support staff, and lack of alignment between schools and district leadership. Professional development opportunities were widely viewed as inadequate and misaligned with staff needs.

The total response rates for the surveys were as follows:

The surveys were administered from April 25, 2025, to May 16, 2025, and the populations and response rates were as follows:

- 1,400 staff members were invited to participate, with 490 responses (35% response rate).
- 7,400 parents were invited to participate, with 1,359 responses (18% response rate).
- 4,100 students, grades 5th through 12th, were invited to participate, with 834 responses (20% response rate).

Please note 10 - 15% is considered average for online surveys response rates.

Survey data highlighted ongoing budget and facility challenges, including maintenance issues and resource shortages, which negatively impact the educational environment. There are also inconsistencies in discipline and bullying policies, and varying levels of parental and community engagement. Benchmarking showed that while MPS's in-school suspension rates are below peer averages, out-of-school suspensions are notably higher, and per-pupil spending is lower than comparable districts.

## Assessment Summary, continued

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Our report recommends establishing clear discipline protocols, improving communication and collaboration between administration and staff, engaging teachers in professional development planning, addressing facility and resource gaps through comprehensive audits and transparent processes, and strengthening alignment between district and school leadership. Increasing efforts to secure alternative funding sources, enhancing mental health support, and fostering a more inclusive and supportive culture are also emphasized.

Overall, our assessment underscores the need for targeted, collaborative action to improve staff morale, operational efficiency, stakeholder satisfaction, and student experience across the Methuen Public Schools district.

Refer to the following slides 8 through 26 for detailed observations and recommendations.

## Observations and Recommendations – Methuen Public School District

Observation	Recommendations for Consideration
<b>Improve Communication and Administrative Responsiveness:</b> Survey results throughout MPS highlight ongoing challenges and frequent breakdowns in communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standardize and increase the frequency of updates to families using consistent communication tools (e.g., weekly emails, app notifications, social media).</li> <li>• Train staff in effective and empathetic communication through trainings such as 'Active Listening' and 'Interpersonal Communication.'</li> <li>• Establish feedback loops where parents and students receive follow-up on concerns, and measure response times and satisfaction rates.</li> </ul>
<b>Redesign Professional Development (PD):</b> As noted in survey results and interviews, Professional development is viewed as insufficient, poorly planned, and not aligned with teacher needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve teachers in selecting PD topics to ensure relevance and practical application.</li> <li>• Offer targeted, subject-specific, and role-based training (e.g., behavior management, trauma-informed teaching, inclusive practices). Allocate structured time for peer-led learning and collaboration and regularly assess PD effectiveness through staff feedback and implementation tracking.</li> </ul>
<b>Standardize Onboarding and Professional Learning for Paraprofessionals:</b> Survey results and interviews indicate that MPS does not have a standardized onboarding process or consistent professional development for paraprofessionals, leading to uneven levels of preparedness and support throughout the district.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide mandatory orientation, ongoing PD, and role-specific training for paraprofessionals.</li> <li>• Evaluate effectiveness through pre- and post-training assessments and collect feedback each semester.</li> </ul>



## Observations and Recommendations – Methuen Public School District, continued

Observation	Recommendations for Consideration
<b>Strengthen Feedback and Recognition for Staff:</b> Survey results and interviews reveal that Methuen lacks a consistent and structured staff recognition program, leading to missed opportunities to celebrate achievements and enhance staff morale and engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a recognition program that celebrates staff accomplishments in newsletters, meetings, and public forums.</li> <li>• Ensure every staff member is acknowledged at least once per year and assess program impact through annual culture survey questions. For example, consider including a staff member spotlight where the individual shares details about themselves.</li> </ul>
<b>Promote Teacher Leadership and Career Ladders:</b> Survey results and interviews show that Methuen lacks a formal system for teacher leadership roles and career advancement, limiting educators' opportunities to shape curriculum, mentoring, and professional development in contrast to practices seen in high-performing districts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create opportunities for teacher leadership in curriculum development, mentoring, or PD facilitation. Consider benchmarking against high-performing districts, including identification of new leadership positions annually.</li> </ul>
<b>Launch a Comprehensive Substitute Teacher Recruitment Campaign:</b> Survey results and interviews indicate that MPS faces inconsistent substitute teacher coverage, leading to lower fill rates and increased strain on current staff compared to districts that employ targeted recruitment strategies and consistently monitor fill rates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with local universities and community organizations to recruit substitutes.</li> <li>• Track fill rates monthly and set a goal to achieve at least a 90% daily substitute coverage rate district-wide within one year.</li> </ul>

## Observations and Recommendations – Methuen Public School District, continued

Observation	Recommendations for Consideration
<p><b>Strengthen School-District and Admin-Staff Alignment:</b> Survey results indicate there is a disconnect between school administration and staff and the central office's vision and priorities. This disconnect creates a lack of coordination between schools and district administration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule regular joint meetings between district leadership and school representatives to align priorities and share updates.</li> <li>• Develop shared accountability metrics and timelines for service delivery.</li> <li>• Use anonymous staff surveys to assess morale and improve communication and trust between administration and staff. This can include reperforming the survey done for this review.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Address Facility Conditions and Maintenance:</b> Issues with leaking roofs, mold, pest infestations, and other maintenance problems at many schools were noted in the survey results and interviews.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a formal facilities audit to identify and prioritize urgent safety and comfort needs (e.g., mold, pests, heating, cleanliness).</li> <li>• Reassess custodial staffing requirements. According to the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) (<a href="https://ceds.ed.gov/element/001866">https://ceds.ed.gov/element/001866</a>), intensive cleaning is primarily designated for specific spaces such as restrooms, special education classrooms, kindergarten rooms, and food service areas. With appropriate supplies and equipment, a single custodian can effectively clean approximately 11,000 to 18,000 square feet within an 8-hour shift, depending on the facility's condition and how heavily it is used.</li> <li>• Create a transparent ticket-tracking system for maintenance issues and schedule quarterly walk-throughs with district staff.</li> <li>• Publicly report on maintenance requests and resolution times.</li> </ul>

## Observations and Recommendations - Methuen Public School District, continued

Observation	Recommendations for Consideration
<p><b>Institute Annual Facilities and Safety Benchmarking:</b> Survey results, interviews, and benchmarking highlight the absence of comprehensive annual reporting on school safety and facility quality, making it difficult to identify performance gaps, set improvement priorities, and demonstrate accountability to stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benchmark Methuen’s facility maintenance, cleanliness, and capital improvement spending to peer districts.</li> <li>• Publish an annual report on school safety and facility quality, with improvement targets for priority issues (e.g., mold, HVAC, playground safety).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Address Disparities in Suspension Rates:</b> Per the benchmarking data, MPS has a lower in-school suspension rate (1.70%) than the peer average (2.35%). However, the out-of-school suspension rate is 6%, notably higher than the comparable average of 3.07%—the highest among the group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build upon the low in-school suspension rate by implementing more preventative and intervention programs aimed at keeping students engaged in the learning environment.</li> <li>• Examine the factors contributing to the high out-of-school suspension rate and ensure consistent application of restorative discipline practices.</li> <li>• Strengthen access to counseling and behavioral support to proactively address student needs.</li> </ul>

## Observations and Recommendations - Methuen Public School District, continued

Observation	Recommendations for Consideration
<b>Implement Consistent Discipline and Bullying Policies:</b> There was significant feedback, in the survey results and during interviews, about inconsistencies in discipline approaches and concerns about bullying response and policy clarity. Additionally, benchmarking showed higher level of out of school suspension rates when compared to peer schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop, communicate, and enforce clear, consistent behavior and anti-bullying protocols across all schools.</li> <li>• Provide staff training in de-escalation, conflict resolution, and trauma-informed practices.</li> <li>• Regularly review and revise policies with input from students and parents.</li> <li>• Track incident response times and outcomes to verify enforcement consistency and track incident outcomes.</li> </ul>
<b>Increase School Funding and Resource Allocation:</b> There were concerns about budget limitations affecting facilities, resources, and staffing in the interviews and survey results. Additionally, benchmarking noted In-district expenditures for MPS in 2023 totaled \$109 million, below the \$120 million average of comparable districts. Expenditure per pupil at MPS was approximately \$19,000, lower than the average of approximately \$21,000 per pupil.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate at the district, town, and state levels for increased funding, specifically earmarked for classroom supplies, special education services, staffing, and urgent facility repairs.</li> <li>• Conduct transparent needs assessments and regularly communicate budget decisions and constraints to staff and families. Track and publicly report progress on funding priorities and spending outcomes.</li> <li>• Review the allocation of resources to ensure funds are directed toward high-impact areas, such as classroom instruction, technology, and student support services.</li> <li>• Seek grants and partnerships to supplement per-pupil expenditures and address areas where funding is below peer averages.</li> </ul>

## Observations and Recommendations - Methuen Public School District, continued

Observation	Recommendations for Consideration
<b>Hire to Retire Process:</b> Per staff interviews, MPS has the opportunity to improve operational efficiency and data integrity by more fully utilizing the comprehensive features of the Frontline system. Leveraging all available modules and committing to staff training and regular system audits will support continuous improvement throughout the hire-to-retain process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MPS should fully leverage the capabilities of the Frontline system to streamline and automate the entire hire-to-retain process. By utilizing all available modules—including onboarding, professional development, certification tracking, and performance appraisals—MPS can improve efficiency, enhance data accuracy, and take advantage of economies of scale. Ongoing staff training and regular system audits are recommended to ensure optimal usage and continuous process improvement.</li><li>• It is essential for MPS to continue adhering to established internal policies and procedures, as well as all applicable Massachusetts state regulations. Consistent compliance will help mitigate risks, promote best practices, and ensure that all employment practices align with both district standards and legal requirements. Establish a formal monitoring system to ensure ongoing adherence to policies and regulatory requirements.</li></ul>

## Observations and Recommendations - Methuen Public School District, continued

Observation	Recommendations for Consideration
<p><b>School Counselors Practices and Licensing Requirements:</b></p> <p>Per staff interviews, MPS demonstrates a commitment to student wellbeing by maintaining its school counseling programs in accordance with district, state, and DESE guidelines. Regular training for counselors and the implementation of a formal monitoring system will support ongoing compliance, while strengthened collaboration with local and municipal mental health resources will enhance the breadth and effectiveness of supports available to students, particularly those requiring intensive intervention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MPS should ensure that its school counselors' mental health programs continue to operate in full compliance with district policies, Massachusetts state regulations, and DESE's Subject Matter Knowledge (SMK) Guidelines. School counselors should be regularly trained and updated on the scope of practice permitted under their certification and licensing requirements.</li><li>• Establish a formal monitoring system to ensure ongoing adherence to policies and regulatory requirements.</li><li>• Additionally, MPS is encouraged to strengthen collaboration with local Methuen resources and municipal mental health services to provide a comprehensive and tiered system of support for students, especially for tier 3 cases. By leveraging both district and community resources, MPS can maximize the continuum of care for student wellbeing while maintaining clear adherence to all applicable standards and legal requirements.</li></ul>

## Observations and Recommendations - Comprehensive Grammar School

Observation	Recommendations for Consideration
<b>Increase Proactive Parent Communication:</b> In the survey results, parents noted a desired improved in communication and engagement, frequently citing inconsistent or delayed updates from teachers. While there are examples of positive communication, a lack of consistent proactive outreach has hindered the development of strong parent-teacher relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a weekly or bi-weekly update system (email, app, or paper) to inform parents about student progress and classroom events.</li> <li>• Measure by tracking the percentage of parents receiving and acknowledging updates each week.</li> </ul>
<b>Strengthen Admin–Staff Collaboration:</b> Survey results indicate that staff experience strained relationships with administration, citing dismissiveness, inadequate communication, and insufficient inclusion and support, all of which contribute to a sense of disconnection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold monthly staff-administration forums to discuss concerns and solutions. Track attendance and follow-up actions.</li> </ul>
<b>Enhance Professional Development:</b> Survey responses show that staff are dissatisfied with professional development, describing it as irrelevant and poorly planned, and emphasizing the need for more practical, subject-specific training and increased teacher input in PD decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involve teachers in selecting PD topics and offer at least two subject-specific PD sessions per semester.</li> <li>• Expand opportunities for collaborative professional learning, such as team-based planning and peer learning communities.</li> <li>• Survey staff on PD relevance and impact.</li> </ul>

## Observations and Recommendations - Comprehensive Grammar School, continued

Observation	Recommendations for Consideration
<b>Improve Resource Allocation Transparency:</b> Survey comments highlight frustration over outdated materials, inadequate technology, and facility maintenance, with parents and staff linking funding shortages and lack of transparency in resource allocation to declining educational quality and overall school upkeep.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish an annual report detailing budget allocations and spending outcomes.</li> <li>• Survey staff and parents on perceived transparency.</li> </ul>
<b>Enhance Bullying Response:</b> Survey respondents expressed frustration with inconsistent discipline and lenient consequences for bullying, describing it as a significant and inadequately addressed issue that leaves students and parents feeling unsupported and highlighting the need for clear, fair policies and stronger, proactive responses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and enforce a clear, consistent anti-bullying protocol, including a 24-hour parent notification policy for reported incidents. Track the number of bullying reports and response times.</li> </ul>
<b>Improve Facility Maintenance:</b> Concerns from the survey results, including unclean classrooms, broken equipment, and unsafe bathrooms, prompted staff and parents to call for more proactive maintenance and increased custodial support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct quarterly facility audits and address issues such as unclean bathrooms, broken equipment, and lack of classroom cleaning. Track completion rates of maintenance requests.</li> </ul>



## Observations and Recommendations – Methuen High School

Observation	Recommendations for Consideration
<b>Improve Administrative Responsiveness:</b> Parents and students reported frustration in the surveys with inconsistent communication regarding academic progress, discipline, and school activities. Some feel their concerns are ignored or dismissed, reflecting an overall perception of insufficient administrative responsiveness despite praise for some individual administrators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a 48-hour response policy for parent and staff concerns, and track resolution rates.</li> </ul>
<b>Enhance Parent-Teacher Communication:</b> Survey results show that parents want more involvement and better communication with teachers, citing insufficient proactive engagement from the school—which leads to feelings of exclusion—and recommending more parent-teacher conferences and enhanced communication channels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require teachers to update grades and communicate with parents at least bi-weekly.</li> <li>Monitor compliance through random audits.</li> </ul>
<b>Revamp Professional Development:</b> Survey responses from staff indicate that current professional development (PD) offerings are perceived as lacking relevance and impact, with a strong demand for greater autonomy, practical skills training, and PD that addresses diverse learning and behavioral needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow staff to select at least 50% of their PD hours and require feedback surveys after each session.</li> </ul>

## Observations and Recommendations – Methuen High School, continued

Observation	Recommendations for Consideration
<b>Standardize Discipline Enforcement:</b> Stakeholders reported in the survey inconsistent and lenient discipline enforcement, along with inadequate responses to bullying, which negatively affect school culture and students' sense of safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise and communicate discipline policies, ensuring consistent application across all staff.</li> <li>• Track disciplinary referrals and outcomes.</li> </ul>
<b>Improve Counseling and Mental Health Services:</b> Survey results indicate that counseling services are generally seen as inadequate, particularly in areas of career preparation and mental health support, leading parents and students to request more proactive, personalized assistance from counselors as well as increased mental health resources and staff training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire at least one additional licensed mental health counselor and ensure all students have access to mental health support.</li> <li>• Monitor counselor caseloads and student utilization rates.</li> </ul>
<b>Increase Budget Transparency:</b> Feedback in the survey, reveals strong concerns about underfunding, inadequate classroom resources, staff turnover, and deteriorating infrastructure, with respondents citing broken equipment, outdated technology, and insufficient materials, while perceived mismanagement and poor communication about budget decisions further undermine trust.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold quarterly town halls to explain budget decisions and gather community input. Track attendance and conduct post-meeting surveys.</li> </ul>

## Observations and Recommendations – Methuen High School, continued

Observation	Recommendations for Consideration
<b>Upgrade Facility Conditions:</b> Survey responses from staff and students frequently highlight poor facility conditions, including issues with cleanliness, temperature control, delayed maintenance, pest infestations, broken equipment, and inadequate bathroom facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Address pest infestations, temperature control, and cleanliness by setting quarterly maintenance targets.</li><li>• Track completion rates and satisfaction surveys.</li></ul>

## Observations and Recommendations – Early Childhood Center

Observation	Recommendations for Consideration
<b>Enhance Parent Communication:</b> Concerns about ineffective communication—particularly related to academic progress, IEP updates, and incident reporting—are widespread, with qualitative feedback revealing a strong desire for more proactive and transparent outreach, despite the Admin Communication to Parents/Students area receiving a mean score of 4.1 in the survey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a weekly progress update for all students, with opt-in for more frequent updates. Track parent engagement.</li> <li>• Implement an incident reporting protocol to notify parents within 24 hours of any school event involving their child.</li> </ul>
<b>Reduce Class Sizes:</b> Recurring concerns in the survey indicate insufficient classroom supplies and high student-to-teacher ratios. The School Budget Rating (2.2) and School Physical Resources Rating (4.0) indicate that, although basic infrastructure is adequate, essential daily teaching resources are lacking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set a maximum class size target and adjust staffing to meet it. Monitor class size averages.</li> <li>• Review supply requests and classroom resource needs semi-annually with input from teaching staff and formally incorporate these data into the annual budgeting process to track progress and maintain adequate teaching resources year over year.</li> </ul>
<b>Improve Facility Safety:</b> Although the Facilities score is a moderate 3.6 in the survey, numerous staff members have reported safety hazards, delayed maintenance responses, and inadequate facility upkeep, including issues such as missing doors and insufficient heating.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct monthly safety inspections and address hazards (e.g., broken equipment, unsafe playgrounds) within two weeks. Track incident reports.</li> </ul>

## Observations and Recommendations – Early Childhood Center, continued

Observation	Recommendations for Consideration
<b>Ensure IEP Compliance:</b> Qualitative survey feedback reflected concerns about unmet IEP services, particularly in areas such as speech therapy, citing staffing shortages and budget limitations as primary barriers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Audit IEP service delivery monthly and communicate status to parents.</li><li>• Track compliance rates and parent satisfaction.</li></ul>
<b>Improve Professional Development:</b> Staff express frustration in the survey results with the limited availability of professional development opportunities tailored to their specific fields, as well as concerns about insufficient pathways for career advancement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Offer at least two PD sessions per year focused on early childhood special education and communication strategies.</li><li>• Monitor participation rates and gather staff feedback after each session to refine offerings and measure progress annually.</li></ul>

## Observations and Recommendations – Marsh Grammar School

Observation	Recommendations for Consideration
<b>Reform Leadership Accountability:</b> Survey responses indicated that staff experience strained relationships with administration, citing favoritism, poor communication, and insufficient support; although some administrators are viewed positively, some also received broader criticism, contributing to a negative dynamic that undermines staff morale and effectiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct annual 360-degree reviews of school leadership, including anonymous staff and parent feedback. Publish summary results.</li> </ul>
<b>Enhance Parent Communication:</b> Qualitative survey responses indicated widespread frustration with concerns being overlooked and messaging remaining inconsistent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require teachers to provide monthly progress updates and hold at least two parent-teacher conferences per year.</li> </ul>
<b>Improve Professional Development:</b> With a low survey score of 2.6, staff describe current professional development offerings as largely irrelevant or ineffective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Redesign PD to focus on staff-identified needs, with at least two sessions per year on behavior management and cultural competence.</li> </ul>
<b>Increase Transparency in Budget and Resource Allocation:</b> Budget and funding constraints received the lowest mean survey score of 2.2, with stakeholders highlighting underfunded programs, insufficient classroom materials, and deteriorating facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publish an annual budget report and hold a public Q&amp;A session.</li> <li>Survey stakeholders on perceived fairness.</li> </ul>

## Observations and Recommendations – Tenney Grammar School

Observation	Recommendations for Consideration
<b>Strengthen Admin–Staff Collaboration:</b> With a survey score of just 2.4, teachers and staff voiced frustration that district decisions often overlook on-the-ground realities, especially in the context of digital learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold monthly staff-administration forums and track follow-up actions.</li> </ul>
<b>Improve Facility Maintenance:</b> Reports of mice infestations, unclean bathrooms, and broken infrastructure are consistent with the low survey scores of 3.1–3.3 in related facility categories.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct quarterly facility audits and address issues (e.g., mice, unclean bathrooms) within two weeks.</li> <li>• Improve sanitation and invest in high-traffic repairs (e.g., restrooms, halls, etc.).</li> </ul>
<b>Revamp Professional Development:</b> Staff gave this area a low rating of 2.2 in the survey, citing that current PD offerings are irrelevant, disorganized, and not aligned with practical teaching needs, particularly for special education staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-design PD with teacher input and require at least two sessions per year on behavior management and inclusivity.</li> <li>• Offer specialized PD for special education and ESL support staff.</li> <li>• Allocate structured time for peer-led learning and collaboration.</li> </ul>

## Observations and Recommendations – Tenney Grammar School, continued

Observation	Recommendations for Consideration
<b>Address Discipline and Safety:</b> With survey scores of 2.9 for bullying and 3.0 for discipline, numerous comments pointed to inconsistent enforcement, ineffective interventions, and emotionally unsafe environments for students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implement a consistent, transparent behavior management system and track incident rates and resolutions monthly.</li></ul>
<b>Enhance Parent Communication:</b> Survey results indicate that parents desire stronger communication and more opportunities for engagement, often citing poor or inconsistent updates from teachers; despite some positive instances, ongoing communication gaps continue to frustrate their involvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Require bi-weekly updates from teachers and hold at least two parent-teacher conferences per year.</li><li>• Monitor parent satisfaction through annual surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of these efforts and make data-driven improvements as needed.</li></ul>



## Observations and Recommendations – Timony Grammar School

Observation	Recommendations for Consideration
<b>Enhance Parent Communication:</b> Survey responses show that parents consistently call for better communication and more opportunities to engage, frequently highlighting that inconsistent or infrequent updates from teachers leave them unaware of their child's academic progress; although there are positive examples, irregular outreach limits effective parent involvement and support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require bi-weekly updates from teachers and hold at least two parent-teacher conferences per year.</li> <li>Monitor parent satisfaction through annual surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of these efforts and make data-driven improvements as needed.</li> </ul>
<b>Strengthen Admin–Staff Collaboration:</b> Survey responses reveal that staff experience strained relationships with administration, citing dismissiveness, inadequate support, poor communication, and a persistent sense of disconnection and lack of follow-through.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold monthly staff-administration forums and track follow-up actions.</li> <li>Implement a transparent feedback and follow-up process, where administrative actions and responses to staff concerns are clearly communicated and documented.</li> </ul>
<b>Revamp Professional Development:</b> Professional Development received the lowest score (2.1) in the survey and was widely criticized as irrelevant and ineffective in qualitative responses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Redesign PD to focus on staff-identified needs, with at least two sessions per year on behavior management and inclusivity.</li> <li>Incorporate peer-led workshops, classroom observation exchanges, and dedicated collaboration time.</li> </ul>
<b>Improve Facility Maintenance:</b> In the survey, physical facilities (2.7), school resources (3.0), and budget (2.2) all scored low, with qualitative data pointing to mold, pests, and outdated equipment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct quarterly facility audits and address issues (e.g., mold, pests, unclean bathrooms) within two weeks.</li> </ul>

## Observations and Recommendations – Timony Grammar School, continued

Observation	Recommendations for Consideration
<b>Standardize Discipline and Bullying Response:</b> Discipline (2.8) and bullying response (2.7) received some of the lowest survey scores, with qualitative feedback revealing significant frustration over inconsistent enforcement and the absence of consistently safe learning environments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and enforce a clear, consistent discipline and anti-bullying protocol, with monthly reporting on incidents and outcomes.</li> <li>• Launch a student-led safety and kindness campaign to promote a culture shift.</li> </ul>
<b>Increase Transparency in Budget and Resource Allocation:</b> The survey noted widespread frustration over inadequate funding, which affects staffing, resources, and program availability, prompting calls for increased investment in education as parents and staff link these shortages to declining educational quality and safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish an annual budget report and hold a public Q&amp;A session.</li> <li>• proactively pursue grant opportunities and partnerships with local businesses and organizations to supplement core funding.</li> <li>• Host regular forums to engage stakeholders in budget planning and communicate progress on financial goals.</li> </ul>
<b>Improve Student Recognition:</b> The survey indicated the absence of a consistent or formal system for recognizing and rewarding positive student behavior and academic achievement, leading to missed opportunities to motivate students and promote a positive school culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a system to regularly recognize and reward positive student behavior and academic achievement.</li> </ul>



# Appendix

## Appendix I - Interview Results Summary

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- A total of 22 individuals were interviewed, including the MPS Superintendent, students (grades 5th through 12th), parents, and both current and former staff members.
- Questionnaires were developed and distributed in advance of each interview. The questions addressed a range of topics, including general school culture; leadership and administration; inclusivity and diversity; the teaching and learning environment; student well-being and support; professional development; collaboration and teamwork; innovation and continuous improvement; parental and community engagement; school climate; and reflective, future-focused considerations.
- Following the completion of the 22 interviews, several recurring themes emerged:
  - **School Culture and Morale:**
    - Significant challenges exist with school culture, particularly at Tenney and Marsh Grammar Schools, where staff describe the environment as “broken,” with high stress and low morale.
    - In contrast, some schools—such as Comprehensive Grammar School and Methuen High School—report a more positive and supportive atmosphere.
    - Overall, sentiment regarding school culture is mixed but generally leans negative due to widespread reports of stress, division, and disengagement among staff.
  - **Administration and Leadership:**
    - Opinions about administration are divided. Some staff and parents feel unsupported, micromanaged, or excluded from decision-making, while others value the superintendent’s and central office’s hands-on involvement.
    - Concerns were also raised about heavy-handed leadership and a lack of follow-through on initiatives.
    - The overall sentiment is mixed, with both positive and negative experiences reported.

## Appendix I - Interview Results Summary, continued

- Recurring themes continued:
  - **Staffing, Turnover, and Support:**
    - High staff turnover, a shortage of substitute teachers, and insufficient support staff—especially in special education and custodial positions—are major concerns.
    - Teachers and support staff often feel overburdened and undervalued, leading to burnout.
    - Sentiment in this area is strongly negative.
  - **Professional Development:**
    - Professional development is widely seen as insufficient, poorly planned, and misaligned with teachers' needs.
    - Many staff express frustration about last-minute notifications and a lack of meaningful training opportunities.
    - The sentiment here is negative.
  - **Inclusivity, Diversity, and Student Support:**
    - There is a strong focus on inclusivity and diversity, with various programs, especially for ESL and special needs students.
    - Despite progress, challenges remain in fully supporting a diverse student population and ensuring all students feel welcome.
    - Sentiment is cautiously positive, recognizing ongoing gaps alongside improvements.
  - **Facilities and Resources:**
    - Numerous schools face significant facility issues (e.g., leaking roofs, mold, pest infestations) and resource shortages (e.g., textbooks, maintenance supplies).
    - Persistent budget constraints affect both the physical environment and the availability of support.
    - Sentiment regarding facilities and resources is negative.

## Appendix I - Interview Results Summary, continued

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- Recurring themes continued:
    - **Parental and Community Engagement:**
      - Engagement with parents and the community varies. Some schools benefit from active PTOs and strong communication, while others experience low participation, limited transparency, and parents feeling unwelcome.
      - There are calls for improved communication, more in-person events, and enhanced collaboration.
      - Overall sentiment is mixed but tends to be negative, reflecting reported barriers and lack of engagement.

## Appendix II - Benchmarking Results Summary

- The benchmarking included factors such as school structure, student enrollment and demographics, class sizes, student attendance and disciplinary data, academic performance, teacher certifications, administrative staffing, funding levels, salaries, and additional relevant metrics.
- Ten school districts were selected for the benchmarking analysis, based on comparable criteria including: total student enrollment, and the percentage of students classified as high needs, English language learners (ELL), first language not English, low income, and students with disabilities.
- Benchmarking information was obtained from multiple sources. These sources included the DESE website, MA DOE website, US News and World Report, and the municipal websites.

*For additional benchmarking data please refer to benchmarking excel document provided in a separate attachment.*

2024-25 Enrollment District Report						
District Name	Total Enrolled Students	High Needs %	ELL %	First Language Not English	Low Income %	SWD %
Taunton	8,311	67.7	11.2	17.7	58.4	21.4
Haverhill	7,940	71.1	14.7	28.9	61.0	25.2
Chicopee	6,755	72.2	8.7	15.5	65.2	21.8
Methuen	6,464	67.0	19.4	33.7	54.3	21.2
Attleboro	6,239	52.5	10.0	18.9	39.6	19.3
Leominster	6,193	66.2	14.7	33.0	52.9	23.7
Waltham	5,777	63.1	25.6	55.3	48.6	18.7
Peabody	5,774	59.9	17.6	27.6	45.3	21.0
Weymouth	5,630	53.3	8.6	18.8	39.8	22.6
Somerville	4,952	60.2	24.6	52.5	46.8	20.1
Barnstable	4,680	66.9	25.2	38.5	53.1	18.2

**Note: MPS operates the fewest schools among its peers, with a total of six, compared to an average of twelve in comparable districts.**

## Appendix III - Survey Results Summary

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- The 2025 Methuen Public School District survey presents findings from a mixed-method analysis of survey responses from the students, parents, and staff of the Methuen Public School District including qualitative feedback and corresponding quantitative ratings across 22 focus areas. The survey results were comprised of 2,683 responses from the following: The Comprehensive Grammar School, Methuen High School, the Early Childhood Center, Marsh Grammar School, Tenney Grammar School, Timony Grammar School, and the Central Administration Building.
- The survey questions were developed based on the themes identified during the interviews.
- The surveys were administered from April 25, 2025, to May 16, 2025, and the populations and response rates were as follows:
  - 1,400 staff members were invited to participate, with 490 responses (35% response rate).
  - 7,400 parents were invited to participate, with 1,359 responses (18% response rate).
  - 4,100 students, grades 5th through 12th, were invited to participate, with 834 responses (20% response rate).
- Responses by school:
  - Central Administration Building had 39 staff responses.
  - Early Childhood Center had 16 staff and 54 parent responses.
  - Tenney Grammar School had 106 staff, 230 parent, and 155 student responses.
  - Timony Grammar School had 79 staff, 270 parent, and 123 student responses.
  - Comprehensive Grammar School had 71 staff, 215 parent, and 101 student responses.
  - Marsh Grammar School had 93 staff, 275 parent, and 112 student responses.
  - Methuen High School had 86 staff, 315 parent, and 343 student responses.



## Appendix III - Survey Results Summary, continued

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- The first survey question for all participants addressed overall sentiment toward MPS. Parents rated their overall experience at MPS at 4.1 out of 5, while students gave a rating of 3.2 out of 5. Staff members rated the overall work environment at MPS at 3.1 out of 5.
- **School Satisfaction – top and bottom rating snapshot:**
  - Parent Satisfaction:
    - Early Childhood Center: highest rating (4.6 out of 5)
    - Timony: lowest rating (3.6 out of 5)
  - Staff Satisfaction:
    - Early Childhood Center: highest rating (4.1 out of 5)
    - Marsh: lowest rating (2.5 out of 5)
    - Timony and Tenney: next lowest ratings (2.9 out of 5 each)
  - Student Satisfaction:
    - Comprehensive Grammar School: highest rating (3.3 out of 5)
    - Timony: lowest rating (2.9 out of 5)
- Survey responses regarding overall school sentiment revealed significant variation, reflecting a broad spectrum of experiences throughout the district. Staff often cited concerns about feeling disconnected from administration, whereas parents and students primarily commented on their day-to-day interactions within the schools. Feedback ranged from gratitude for supportive and positive environments to frustration with elements viewed as toxic.

## Appendix III - Survey Results Summary, continued

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- The **Comprehensive Grammar School (CGS)** had an overall score of 71.9%.
- For CGS, among all survey participants, the highest rated areas were afterschool and extracurricular activities, which received a score of 4.2 out of 5, followed by both diversity and inclusion and academic experience, each with a rating of 4.1 out of 5.
- The three lowest rated areas at CGS were school budget at 2 out of 5, professional development at 3.0 out of 5, and response to bullying at 3.2 out of 5.
- **Methuen High School (MHS)** received an overall score of 70%.
- MHS received especially high ratings in Academic Experience (4.2), After-School Programs (4.2), and School Safety (4.0). Many respondents expressed satisfaction with the supportive environment and the commitment of staff. However, there were ongoing concerns regarding budget transparency (2.2), alignment between the school and district (2.7), and the effectiveness of professional development (2.9).
- The **Early Childhood Center (ECC)** achieved an overall score of 79.5%, reflecting both qualitative and quantitative feedback from parents and staff.
- ECC stakeholders reported high levels of satisfaction with general school sentiment, parent-teacher relationships, school safety, and the nurturing environment fostered by staff and teachers. Despite these strengths, several key challenges were identified across multiple areas, such as school budget and facilities, indicating opportunities for targeted improvements to further enhance the educational experience and operational efficiency.

## Appendix III - Survey Results Summary, continued

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- **Marsh Grammar School (MGS)** received an overall score of 64.9%.
  - While many MGS students benefit from dedicated teachers and positive academic experiences, the overall results indicate dissatisfaction in several key areas—most notably administrative responsiveness, budget limitations, school culture, and support for students with special needs. Quantitative data reflect these concerns, with particularly low ratings in budget (2.2), professional development (2.6), district alignment (2.6), and admin-staff relations (2.6). Qualitative feedback further highlights recurring issues such as breakdowns in communication, inconsistent discipline practices, a challenging work environment, and equity concerns. These areas should be prioritized for targeted improvement efforts.
- **Tenney Grammar School** received an overall score of 65.4%.
  - Tenney received low scores in areas related to budget constraints (2.1), professional development (2.2), and school–district alignment (2.4). While the school demonstrates strengths in student safety (4.0), academic experience (4.0), and extracurricular programs (4.2), these results indicate there are critical areas that require immediate and focused improvement.
- **Timony Grammar School** received an overall score of 62%.
  - The qualitative and quantitative data for Timony indicate that while isolated positives exist, especially around extracurriculars and inclusion, the school community is largely concerned with funding (2.2 out of 5 rating), facilities (2.7 out of 5 rating), student safety (2.7 out of 5 rating), communication (3.3 out of 5 rating), and support structures (2.4 out of 5 rating). Additionally, like in the survey results for the other schools, professional development was also rated low at 2.1 out of 5.
- For full survey results please refer to survey pdf provided in a separate attachment.



# Thank You

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