

# District Equity Audit

Prepared for Hudson Public Schools  
April 2023



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This equity audit report is the result of an effort initiated by Hudson Public Schools to understand the ways the district can build upon strengths and align resources to meet the needs of the diverse student body, staff, and families, particularly prioritizing those from marginalized populations. When referenced by Hudson Public Schools, educational equity means:

“the measure or state of fair and just conditions in which everyone can fully participate, succeed, be their full selves, and reach their full potential, regardless of their identity.”<sup>1</sup>

Through this externally-conducted equity audit, the district hopes to have a better understanding of stakeholders' lived experiences and opportunities for creating a more equitable, accessible, and inclusive educational system that supports the success of all district stakeholders.

Hudson Public Schools partnered with Mass Insight Education & Research to conduct this equity audit with the following **objectives**:

1. gather information about the district's current strengths and areas for growth relative to diversity, equity, and inclusive practices and policies;
2. prompt reflective conversations about the current status of diversity, equity, and inclusivity compared to its desired state; and
3. identify opportunities to improve equitable practices throughout the district by providing recommendations designed to focus attention and resources to fully support its diverse students, staff, and community.

The equity audit was informed by an extensive data and artifact review, interviews, focus groups, phone calls, and surveys of students, families, community partners, and school and district staff. Findings are presented in alignment with Mass Insight's District Equity Framework, which contains nine domains. The first two domains—Vision, Strategy & Culture, and Equitable Student Access & Outcomes—are foundational and intentionally presented first. **Findings** indicate district structural strengths and adaptive investments that the district has already made to support its continued growth trajectory on its equity journey, as well as opportunities and areas for continued growth to ensure full access, opportunity, and success for all stakeholders.

### Domain 1: Vision, Strategy & Culture

- District administration has been intentional about creating a culture aligned to its vision and mission.
- The district improvement plan, along with aligned school improvement plans, contains data-driven and student-centered strategic objectives, priorities, and outcomes.
- School-level cultures have become increasingly welcoming, and more is needed to be inclusive of all aspects of identity and supportive of all students' success.

### Domain 2: Equitable Student Access & Outcomes

- District policies, practices, and mindsets reflect a commitment to equity as evidenced by disaggregated data monitoring practices and resulting actions. However, while disaggregated data is accessible to district leaders and staff to understand students' needs and create improvements, not all data structures are proven effective.
- The recommendation process for advanced and honors courses results in limited access for students of color and marginalized students.

### Domain 3: Student Readiness to Learn

- The district has social-emotional learning (SEL) programs, specialized staff, community resources, and a curriculum to support students' SEL needs.

- The Choose Love curriculum includes topics that some students and teachers may not yet be ready to engage in together.

#### **Domain 4: Culturally & Linguistically Sustaining Instruction**

- District stakeholders report recent progress in classroom instruction that connects with a diverse learner population.
- Structures are in place to support students academically, though intentional systems for struggling students are underdeveloped, especially at upper levels.
- The teacher evaluation structure does not yet consistently support productive, aligned developmental feedback.

#### **Domain 5: Family & Community Engagement**

- District communication structures are developing and seek to include and amplify the voices of the community.
- While family participation and inclusion are a district priority, there remain opportunities to further engage families in decision-making, feedback, and implementation.

#### **Domain 6: School Instructional Leadership**

- HPS has provided some professional development training and opportunities for all faculty and staff. Staff expresses a need and desire for ongoing and sustained professional development aligned with their school priorities.
- School budgets are aligned with SIP priorities and the needs of marginalized student populations.
- School staff report limited opportunities to collaboratively monitor student data and a lack of appropriate student data.

#### **Domain 7: Talent Development**

- There are some clear district Human Resources systems and structures, but not yet systems and strategies to fully support recruitment, development, and retention of staff from historically marginalized groups.
- The staff evaluation process does not currently fully support district and school priorities or staff strengths and opportunities to improve their professional practice.

#### **Domain 8: Conditions**

- The district prioritizes the success of marginalized student populations, and individual school needs in its goal-setting and decision-making processes.
- The district has a strong foundation for developing and implementing equitable structures, systems, policies, and practices that address the needs of schools and students.
- District communication structures and feedback protocols are developing and seek to incorporate stakeholder feedback to inform decisions and measure programmatic effectiveness.

#### **Domain 9: Governance**

- The school committee is engaged and active in district improvement efforts through planning and implementation of the strategic plan.
- There is not yet a shared understanding of equity or equitable practices within the existing school committee structure, directly impacting the related policy and decision-making process.

An analysis across findings surfaced four main recommendations for the district to consider to advance equity, access, and inclusivity. **Recommendations** include steps that the district can take to further equity, access, and opportunities

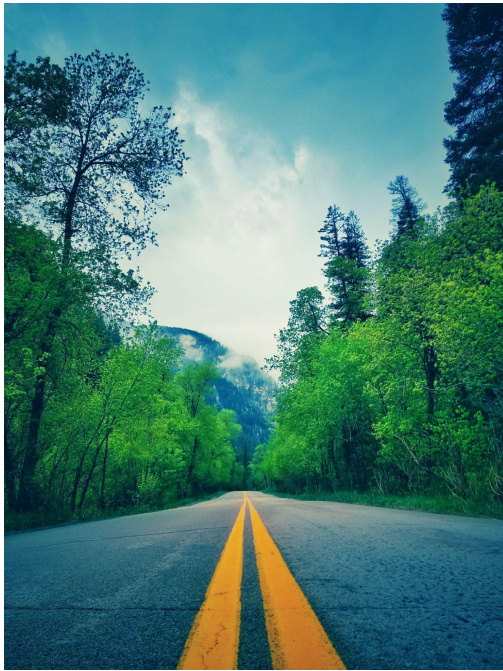
for all students in the district, as well as considerations and resources to support district discussions and decision-making.

- Build collective awareness and responsibilities for equitable practices.
  - Expand the opportunities for DEI, learning, and development. Focus on creating an arc of continuous learning that allows for collective decision-making.
  - Revisit the process for engaging community and school partners to expand DEI-AB services.
  - Align School Committee DEI development and support to the district's Strategic Plan.
- Leverage flexible academic blocks at the secondary level (HawkBlock and ARC) to build out Tier II academic interventions for students needing extra support.
  - Support teachers to establish or build out data collection and analysis routines to identify students needing additional academic instruction or support.
  - Set an expectation that each teacher uses a portion of their HawkBlock/ARC time on a weekly basis for intervention, for which students are scheduled ahead of time and required to attend.
  - Track data on which students are assigned to intervention and how often to surface patterns across grade levels, subjects, and subgroups.
- Infuse dedicated time for relationship building into the current SEL structure at the middle and high schools.
  - Reframe the SEL block to include a focus on relationship-building to supplement Choose Love lessons.
  - Support staff to understand and implement relationship-building in the SEL block.
  - Create space in staff SEL/Choose Love development opportunities to share the rationale behind dedicated relationship-building time and try out connecting strategies for various ages and groups.
  - At the high school, consider working SEL into the schedule regularly, perhaps as part of an ARC rotation.
- Provide professional learning/development opportunities and ongoing support for stakeholders to develop their skills and comfort in engaging in courageous conversations about DEI and equity based practices while aligning staff feedback and evaluation structures to district priorities.
  - Revise the professional development and learning vision and mission to amplify the district's commitment to DEI.
  - Create a system of tracking for accessibility and accountability for the professional development of all staff to ensure alignment with the equity goals of the district (tracking conferences, PD, etc.)
  - Review existing staff feedback and evaluation structures and district improvement plan to understand alignments as a means of prioritizing DEI and staff growth.
  - As outlined in Recommendation 3, utilize the diversity, equity, and inclusion/culturally responsive team to engage staff in reviewing and addressing changes to the evaluation and feedback process.
  - Seek staff feedback to inform changes to the evaluation process, priorities, and structures
  - Train evaluators on how to use the evaluation process

For equity to fully infuse into all aspects of the system, this equity work must become the responsibility of everyone in the district. This requires a common understanding and acknowledgment that existing policies and practices require revision and that collaborative decision-making is essential to building collective responsibility. We recommend that Hudson Public Schools and its leaders carefully review and consider all findings while engaging in continuous equity-based discussions grounded on qualitative and quantitative data, as means of forward in its equity journey.

We commend Hudson Public Schools on its commitment to equity for all students.

# INTRODUCTION



## Equity as a Journey

Hudson Public Schools recognizes the need to better understand the extent to which its systems, policies, and practices are impacting students, staff, and families equitably. While this audit provides a current picture of equity, it is important to realize that increasing equity is an ongoing improvement journey that will require the engagement of all staff, students, families, and community members. We hope that this audit will support all district stakeholders to both individually and collectively develop an equity lens and mindset to build upon the strong foundation already in the district so all stakeholders come to see equity as part of their daily work. By championing inclusive and equitable practices, the district will change the education landscape and the lived experience of all stakeholders, particularly those marginalized.

Technical adjustments can create change, but disrupting larger and more systemic access, opportunity, and success gaps requires consistent individual and collective focus to address mindsets, practices, policies, and systems over time. Enacting sustainable change will require ongoing examinations of how decisions, policies,

and practices impact the educational experiences of all district students, staff, families, and community.

Photo by [Drew Rae](#) from [Pexels](#)

## Key Definitions

Hudson Public Schools uses a set of terms and definitions to create a shared language and framework for equity-related conversations. To build awareness of the district's equity language, the following key terms are provided here to serve as a reference when interpreting this document:

- Diversity: Groups of individuals reflect multiple dimensions of difference, including race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, cognitive styles, and much more. Valuing diversity means representing, embracing, and celebrating the rich dimensions of traits, experiences, and backgrounds that exist in groups.<sup>2</sup>
- Equity: the measure or state of fair and just conditions in which everyone can fully participate, succeed, be their full selves, and reach their full potential, regardless of their identity.<sup>1</sup>
- Identity: a person's sense of self-defined by a) a range of social and physical affiliations and b) one's personal life experiences, memories, relationships, and values.<sup>1</sup>
- Inclusion: the act of creating environments in which any individual or group feels welcome, respected, supported, and valued as a fully participating member, irrespective of differences, as evidenced in the words and actions of all people.<sup>1</sup>

- Marginalized populations: groups (including but not limited to racial, ethnic, linguistic, social class, gender, sexual orientation, age, religious, cultural, or ability groups) that experience discrimination and exclusion as a result of current and/or historical social, political, economic power dynamics or oppression from dominant groups.<sup>1</sup>
- Stakeholder: a person with a connection to or vested interest in the welfare and success of a school or district (for example, school and district staff, students, families, partners, and community members).<sup>1</sup>

## Objectives of the Equity Audit

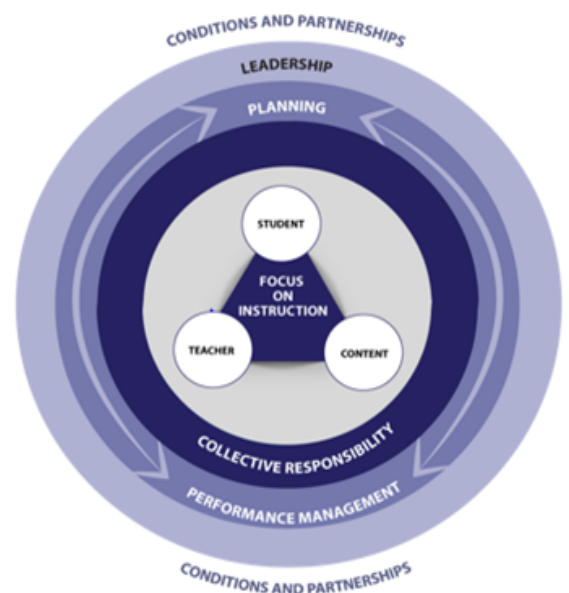
During the 2022-23 school year, Hudson Public Schools partnered with Mass Insight Education & Research (Mass Insight) to conduct a district equity audit to understand the ways the district can build upon current strengths and align conditions to meet the needs of its diverse student body, staff, families, and the greater Hudson community. Specifically, the audit objectives were to:

1. gather information about the district’s current strengths and areas for growth relative to diversity, equity, and inclusive practices and policies;
2. prompt reflective conversations about the current status of diversity, equity, and inclusivity as compared to its desired state; and
3. identify opportunities to improve equitable practices throughout the district by providing recommendations destined to focus attention and resources to fully support its diverse students, staff, and community.

This equity audit is intended to inform the next steps that the district can take to create a more equitable and inclusive district for all stakeholders. It is not intended to serve as an equity-focused improvement or strategic plan but should inform the current and future district priorities. It is not intended to give prescriptive steps to increase equity, as that is part of the work and journey that the district must engage in as a district and community to build the awareness, understanding, and capacity of all stakeholders. This equity audit names the foundational strengths that the district already has in place to take the findings, internalize them, and determine collectively—as departments, schools, and positions need or require—what the next steps are to actively and intentionally continue on its journey to create greater equity and a more inclusive educational environment for every student, staff member, family member, and member of the Hudson community.

## About Mass Insight and Our Commitment to Equity

Mass Insight Education & Research is a national nonprofit that supports schools, districts, and state education agencies. Our mission is to provide leadership in closing achievement and opportunity gaps for underserved students to drive college and career success by focusing on system transformation and student academic success. Mass Insight is a recognized national leader in school improvement, providing advanced academic program support, research, and strategic consulting services. Since 2009, Mass Insight has worked at all levels of the K-12 education system in Massachusetts and across the country to redesign and reimagine systems and conditions to



increase the outcomes and success of students, particularly those who have been systemically marginalized.

Our work is grounded in our Theory of Action, a set of deeply held, organization-wide values and commitments about school improvement, which states:

We believe that schools can substantially improve the outcomes and success of their students, particularly those who have been systemically marginalized, by eliminating barriers to student learning through a focus on:

- **Conditions:** Schools have sufficient control over people, time, money, and program to address the root causes of disparate outcomes;
- **Planning:** Evidence-based, actionable improvement plans prioritize meeting the needs of all students and are informed by a review of existing conditions and input from school, district, and community stakeholders;
- **Leadership:** The principal manages and communicates complexity while maintaining focus on the school's vision, key priorities, and the success of all students;
- **Instruction:** Processes and supports continuously help teachers work together to improve and refine standards-based instruction so that all students can access and engage in rigorous learning;
- **Collective Responsibility:** The school faculty and staff demonstrate collective responsibility for both the quality of instruction and the learning and success of all students;
- **Performance Management:** Consistent processes are utilized to monitor and measure plan implementation and outcomes, determine what's working, and inform efforts to improve; and,
- **Partnerships:** The school develops partnerships with families and community organizations to meet the needs of teachers and students.

Mass Insight believes the school is the unit of change and improvement, and our work with schools and districts begins by understanding local strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. Mass Insight believes that all students should have equitable opportunities and access to a high-quality K-12 education, regardless of zip code, economic status, gender, race, ethnicity, ability, or language. Our commitment to equity is grounded in the belief that every student can achieve and exceed common expectations when provided with high-quality education and the support they need.

We also believe that equality and equity are fundamentally different. Achieving greater equity requires an intentional focus on overcoming the historical legacy of racism, discrimination, marginalization, and underinvestment that continues to disadvantage specific groups of people. As equity-minded institutions dismantle inequitable systems, practices, and mindsets, they often replace equal supports and resources with differentiated or tiered supports to focus efforts on marginalized populations that do not yet have the access and opportunities of their peers. This process requires all stakeholders' willingness "to take personal and institutional responsibility for the success of their students and critically reassess their own practices."<sup>3</sup>



## METHODOLOGY

This section describes the framework, timeline, process, and methods utilized to gather qualitative and quantitative documents, artifacts, and data sources that Mass Insight collected and analyzed to inform the equity audit. Inclusive methods of engagement were collaboratively employed by Mass Insight with the district's full support to ensure the equity audit was informed by stakeholder voices and perspectives, which are described in greater detail in this section.

### Mass Insight's District Equity Framework

Mass Insight believes the school is the unit of change and improvement. Therefore, our work with schools and districts begins by understanding local strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. Our Equity Framework outlines our process for understanding the current reality and the extent to which district stakeholders, including staff, students, families, partners, and community members, experience equity.

Mass Insight's District Equity Framework was the lens through which our data and document collection, focus groups, interviews, and surveys were designed, conducted, and analyzed. The Findings are written in alignment with framework domains. At the same time, Recommendations are more organic and aligned with the Hudson Public Schools District Improvement Plan, recognizing the work already underway in the district and the interconnectedness within K-12 educational systems. Mass Insight's District Equity Framework consists of the following nine domains and highest-performing district descriptors, which are included in the [Appendix](#).

- **Vision, Strategy & Culture:** The district focuses on creating an inclusive environment for all stakeholders and strategically addressing data-informed disparities in student performance and success outcomes.
- **Equitable Student Access & Outcomes:** Data and monitoring practices indicate a district-wide focus on ensuring equitable student access, success, and outcomes.
- **Student Readiness to Learn:** The district ensures students experience an inclusive learning environment, as well as social-emotional, developmental, and mental health support needed to fully engage in learning.
- **Culturally & Linguistically Sustaining Instruction:** Students experience rigorous instruction that is culturally and linguistically sustaining and validates their identities, needs, and interests.
- **Family and Community Engagement:** District communication and family engagement opportunities are inclusive and accessible, leveraging families as partners in their child(ren)'s learning experience.
- **School Instructional Leadership:** District conditions ensure principals can leverage their people, time, programs, and financial allocations to focus on school-level needs and prioritize the access, opportunities, and success outcomes of marginalized students.
- **Talent Development:** The district's talent development strategy focuses on bringing in new and diverse staff, as well as ensuring ongoing professional learning opportunities for all staff to create an inclusive work and learning environment that reflects district values, priorities, and needs.
- **Conditions:** The district invests and aligns resources, including time, staffing, finances, and programs to prioritize marginalized populations and ensures schools have the necessary flexibility with those resources to address their community's unique needs.

- **Governance:** The governing body prioritizes and models equity and inclusivity in its decision-making processes.

## Data Sources and Collection Methods

Mass Insight’s equity audit approach focused on a system-wide understanding of equity within Hudson Public Schools as evidenced by stakeholder experiential data, district and school performance data, and various artifacts. It is worth noting that our use of “data” is more inclusive than quantitative student assessment results. While it is a common accountability practice to evaluate schools and districts quantitatively with student achievement data, our equity audit process includes and elevates qualitative data to understand the lived experiences of students, families, and staff. This allows us to understand holistically how stakeholders interact, how stakeholder communication functions internally and externally, the extent to which students experience an inclusive and supportive learning-centered environment, the extent to which staff experience an inclusive and supportive work environment, and the extent to which families and community stakeholders feel welcome in schools and the district.

We invested significant time in gathering the representative voices of stakeholders—students, families, community partners, school staff, school leaders, and district staff—throughout the audit process in focus groups, interviews, phone calls, and surveys. The audit process gathered data from middle school and high school students through surveys and student focus groups. Our process also included family surveys and 1:1 phone calls, staff surveys, and focus groups with district and school leaders and Hudson Public Schools School Committee members.

It is also important to understand that while the Mass Insight framework is holistic, the audit timeline and scope limit the level of depth at which we can examine all elements. For example, the audit did not include an assessment of individual schools, a review of all content area curricular resources, an in-depth financial audit, or an analysis of transportation logistics. All of these were examined at a high level, some more thoroughly than others, based on data from documents, surveys, or focus groups.

## Phases of Data Collection and Analysis

The graphic below displays the timeline, phases, and high-level steps in the equity audit process.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Phase 1: Planning &amp; Preparation</b><br>August - September 2022           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Kick-off meeting</li> <li>● Customization of tools and processes</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Phase 2: Data Collection &amp; Analysis</b><br>August - September 2022       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Student performance analysis</li> <li>● District policy and artifact analysis</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Phase 3: Stakeholder Engagement</b><br>October - December 2022               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stakeholder surveys</li> <li>● Stakeholder focus groups, interviews, and phone calls</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Phase 4: Analysis &amp; Report of Findings</b><br>December 2022 - March 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Analysis and triangulation of findings</li> <li>● Development and delivery of the equity audit report</li> <li>● Presentation to the school committee</li> </ul> |

## Documents, Artifacts, and Relevant District and School Success Measures

Mass Insight requested an extensive list of documents and data at the start of the equity audit. Publicly available information was also part of the data and artifact review. Superscripts throughout the report denote the sources for

quantitative and qualitative data. While extensive documents, artifacts, and data were reviewed, not all were included in the audit or applicable to the Findings and Recommendations.

The table below contains *examples* of the types of documents, artifacts, and data we examined by domain of our District Equity Framework. Note that many additional documents and data sources were examined, but not all are listed here. Examining a wide variety of documents and data sources supports the data triangulation methodology, which removes potential biases and preferences for certain data sources over others.

| Equity Audit Domain                                | Examples of Reviewed Documents, Artifacts, and Data  |
|--|--|
| Vision, Strategy & Culture                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● District Highlights reports</li> <li>● District Improvement Plan 2018-2021</li> </ul>   |
| Equitable Student Access & Outcomes                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● MTSS policies and handbook</li> <li>● Implementation Tool Tier I-III academic, attendance, and behavior</li> <li>● Superintendent reports</li> <li>● Tiered focused monitoring process</li> </ul> |
| Student Readiness to Learn                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Professional development plans</li> <li>● School psychologists' cycle of inquiry</li> </ul>   |
| Culturally & Linguistically Sustaining Instruction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● District-wide assessments</li> <li>● District-approved curricular resources</li> <li>● Curricular scopes &amp; sequences</li> <li>● RTI resources</li> </ul>                                      |
| Family & Community Engagement                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Liaisons and Welcome Center</li> <li>● Parent listening sessions</li> <li>● Registration steps</li> <li>● Padres Comprometidos</li> </ul>   |
| School Instructional Leadership                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● School improvement plans</li> </ul>   |
| Talent Development                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● New hire orientation</li> <li>● Tenure Staff list</li> <li>● Teacher and Administrator self-assessment</li> <li>● HPS Educator Collection of Evidence</li> </ul>                                  |
| Conditions   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● District budget</li> <li>● New Programs - Services</li> </ul>   |
| Governance   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reports of the Superintendent</li> <li>● School committee meeting minutes and recordings</li> </ul>   |

## Surveys

Mass Insight's surveys are an opportunity for all stakeholders to voluntarily share their experiences to inform the equity audit. Our surveys are designed to be anonymous; no identifying information is used to allow us to connect specific responses to specific individuals. The exception to anonymity is if a survey respondent included identifying information in the open responses they provided. Mass Insight shares all survey responses with districts after the

equity audit is complete because it is important for district and school leaders, in particular, to read and better understand the extent to which stakeholders view the district as equitable and inclusive. Before we share the survey responses, we meticulously remove all identifying information (names or references to individuals, staff, or schools) to maintain anonymity.

**Survey Participation Efforts**

Surveys were administered in October and November 2022 for seven stakeholder groups: district-level staff, school leaders, school-level staff, middle and high school students, families, community partners, and school committee members. Surveys were available on the Survey Monkey® platform for all stakeholder groups in English, as well as in Portuguese and Spanish for students and family members.

As surveys are anonymous and a quick way to gain a broad understanding of stakeholders’ perspectives and experiences, the district was intentional about its outreach methods to encourage stakeholders to participate. The district notified stakeholders of the seven surveys in the following ways::

- District-level staff: received the survey link via email
- School leaders: received the survey link via email
- School-level staff: received the survey link via email
- Middle and high school students: received the survey link via email from school leaders and/or teachers
- Families: received the survey link via district emails, texts, the district website
- Community partners: received the survey link via email
- School committee members: received the survey link via email

Each survey was open for at least three weeks for participants to complete.

**Survey Design & Participation**

Each survey was tailored to its specific stakeholder group, and some questions were shared among several surveys for comparison purposes. Questions on each survey were designed to inform specific domains of the equity audit framework and provide a high-level understanding of the extent to which stakeholders feel included, supported, valued, and treated equitably within the district. Most survey items were multiple choice, and each contained 2-5 open-response questions.

The following display provides participation information about each survey.

|  |  |                   |                            |
|--|--|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 631 Students<br><i>Offered in English, Portuguese, and Spanish</i> | 158 Families<br><i>Offered in English, Portuguese, and Spanish</i> | 216 School Staff  | 5 School Committee Members |
| 3 Community Partners   | 52 School Leaders  | 12 District Staff |                            |

**Interviews, Focus Groups, and Family Phone Calls**

As an external entity contracted for the purpose of this audit, Mass Insight intentionally works to quickly develop rapport and trust with all focus groups and interview participants so we can as thoroughly and accurately as possible understand various stakeholders’ lived experiences and perspectives. Our focus group, interview, and phone call processes begin with a description of our confidentiality and anonymity protections to ensure stakeholder trust so they feel as comfortable as possible sharing their personal experiences. Notes from focus groups and interviews

remain confidential and will neither be shared with anyone in Hudson Public Schools or outside of Mass Insight nor used for any other purpose than this equity audit.

**Efforts to Increase Stakeholder Participation**

Focus groups and interviews are an additional method for gathering stakeholder perspectives, yet are not completely anonymous, as stakeholders must volunteer, sign up, or agree to participate and are asked a few identifying questions at the beginning of a focus group, interview, or phone call so their responses can be compared to those of like stakeholders. The identities of staff, students, families, and focus group participants remain anonymous outside of Mass Insight.

Stakeholders were notified in the following ways about participating in focus groups, interviews, and phone calls, all of which took place between October and December 2022:

- District-level staff: Mass Insight requested focus groups and interviews with various district-level staff, who were contacted and scheduled with the support of district administrators.
- School leaders: Mass Insight requested principal and assistant principal focus groups, all of which were contacted and scheduled with the support of district administrators.
- Students: The student survey contained an opportunity for students to volunteer to participate in a student focus group, and school leaders and teachers also informed students about the opportunity. School leaders supported Mass Insight by scheduling the onsite focus groups, which took place at David J. Quinn Middle School and Hudson High School on November 9-10, 2022. Mass Insight staff who conducted onsite focus groups completed the CORI process, as required by visitors of any school in Massachusetts, and wore identification badges provided by the district while in the schools.
- Families: Mass Insight requested and received a randomized list of 2,400 district families’ phone numbers, school(s) of attendance, and preferred language. The list was compiled by the district and contained a representation of families’ contact information from all district schools.
- School committee members: Mass Insight requested focus groups with members of the Hudson School Committee, all of which were contacted and scheduled with the support of district administrators.
- Community partners: Mass Insight requested interviews with key district partners, all of which were contacted and scheduled with the support of district administrators.

Note that focus groups and interviews were conducted by at least two Mass Insight staff members, except for staff and family phone calls, each of which was conducted by only one Mass Insight staff member. For family phone calls, a standardized protocol was used.

**Interview, Focus Group, and Phone Call Design and Participation Rates**

All focus group, interview, and phone call questions were similar across stakeholder focus groups. Focus group questions, similar to survey items, were aligned with the equity audit framework and were designed to help understand the extent to which systems, structures, policies, and practices throughout the district create an inclusive, supportive, collaborative, and equitable learning and work environment. Focus group facilitators were able to ask non-standard questions at their discretion to probe deeper depending upon participants’ responses. The table below provides additional information about interviews, focus groups, and phone call participants.

| Participant Information |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 20 District-level staff | Interviews and focus groups with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Superintendent</li> <li>● Food Services staff</li> </ul> |

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
|                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assistant Superintendent</li> <li>Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Department staff</li> <li>Student Services Department staff</li> <li>Human Resources Department staff</li> <li>Health Services Department staff</li> <li>English Language Development Department staff</li> <li>Special Education Department staff</li> <li>Finance Department staff</li> <li>Technology Department staff</li> <li>Transportation staff</li> </ul>   |
| 8 School leaders           | <p>Focus groups with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PK and elementary principals</li> <li>PK and elementary assistant principals</li> <li>Middle school principal</li> <li>Middle school assistant principals</li> <li>High school principal</li> <li>High school assistant principals</li> </ul>   |
| 44 School-level staff      | <p>Interviews and focus groups with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General education teachers in elementary, middle, and high school</li> <li>ELD teachers at each level</li> <li>Special education teachers at each level</li> <li>Paraprofessionals</li> </ul>  |
| 81 Students                | <p>Focus groups with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students in grades 5-6, 7, 8-9, and 11-12</li> <li>Middle and high school students in special education</li> <li>Portuguese and Spanish Heritage classes in middle and high school</li> <li>Students in the middle school GSA</li> <li>Students Against Racism in the high school</li> <li>High school students identifying as LGBTQIA+</li> <li>High school students in sports or theater programs</li> </ul> <p>Note, identity-based groups were available for students, and interpretation was provided for Spanish (by Mass Insight) and Portuguese (by the district).</p> |
| 13 Families                | <p>Family phone calls were made to a representative sample of families from all schools in the district.</p>   |
| 4 School committee members | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two focus groups open to all school committee members</li> </ul>  |

## Data Analysis

Throughout the equity audit process, Mass Insight analyzes and synthesizes data to surface commonalities and discrepancies among data sources to test developing hypotheses. Qualitative and quantitative data are necessary to understand the extent to which systems, structures, policies, practices, and behaviors impact stakeholders. Data sources (as described in the previous section) include survey responses; focus groups, phone calls, and interview responses; quantitative data; and documents and artifacts. Collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing multiple data sources allows the Mass Insight team to organize findings and determine emerging themes that form the foundation of our findings.

Survey responses from the Portuguese- and Spanish-translated surveys required additional analysis steps. First, certified multilingual translators translated open responses from the non-English family and student surveys into English. Mass Insight then analyzed these survey responses separately to understand if there were differences among responses of varied preferred languages. Mass Insight also analyzed the same open-response items and the English survey responses for overall trends and themes. This qualitative analysis used Excel software to determine commonalities and themes in non-multiple choice survey responses.

Like open-response survey items, all survey responses were compared across respondents to determine discrepancies. For instance, many survey items were asked across surveys, enabling comparisons about, for instance, how district staff, school leaders, and school staff responded to the same question. Some surveys asked respondents whether they identified with a marginalized population, which allowed Mass Insight to filter responses and determine if respondents who self-identified with a marginalized population responded differently from those who did not. Another example is sorting school leader and staff responses by school level: elementary, middle, or high school.

Throughout the data collection and stakeholder engagement phases, the Mass Insight team analyzed each piece of evidence separately. Once we began the analysis and report of findings phase, our team cross-synthesized or triangulated data sources for each domain of the Mass Insight District Equity Framework (see [Appendix](#)), again noting common themes and discrepancies that emerged in the findings. The triangulation process also includes comparing the foundational strengths, findings, opportunities for growth, and proposed recommendations against our highest-performing district descriptor of the Equity Audit Framework, thus removing potential biases from the process as we prioritize recommendations aligned to research-supported best practices of equitable and inclusive school systems.

The Mass Insight team that supported the equity audit process consisted of one engagement director, an engagement manager, two consultants, and an analyst. Team members' identities vary by race, ethnicity, native language, gender, and past educational experience, yet all identities were leveraged to support our process and the resulting report. The team was intentionally designed to be diverse to not only mitigate potential biases throughout our process but also to create trusting stakeholder engagement experiences for those we engaged with throughout the equity audit. The team met weekly during the equity audit and collectively developed the findings headlines to ensure the report is as unbiased and data-informed as possible.

Identifying recommendations is cross-experiential and intentionally invites all team members who gathered, collected, and analyzed different data sources to participate equally, thus eliminating potential biases that we individually hold based on differing experiences in the audit process. The findings section was written first, resulting from triangulating data, documents, artifacts, and responses from surveys, focus groups, interviews, and phone calls. After writing the findings sections, the team identified gaps or areas of need when comparing findings to our highest-performing district descriptors and then created aligned recommendations that considered the district's capacity, current initiatives and strategic priorities, and stakeholder feedback. The recommendations are written to indicate the next steps the district can take to increase equity, access, and inclusivity for all stakeholders.

# DISTRICT PROFILE

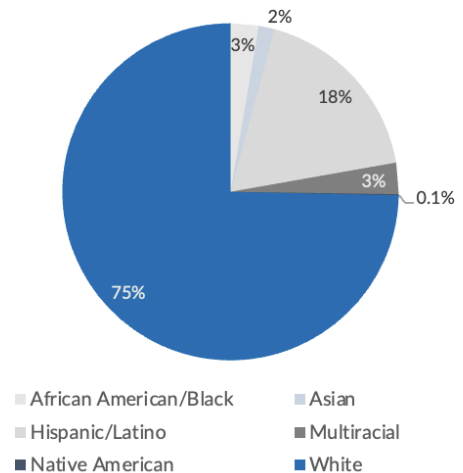
|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>2022-2023 Enrollment</b><br><br>2,323 Students<br><br>229 Teachers (FTE) | <b>5 Schools</b><br>3 Elementary Schools (PreK-Grade 4)<br>1 Middle School (Grades 5-7)<br>1 High School (Grades 8-12)          | <b>Selected Special Populations</b><br><br>32.1% First Language not English<br>15.8% English Language Learner<br>37.3% Low-income<br>19.6% Students with Disabilities<br>53.0% High Needs |
| <b>7-Member School Committee</b><br><br>3-year terms<br>Chairperson elected | <b>District Accountability Status:</b><br>2021 Moderate progress toward targets<br><br>Not requiring assistance or intervention | <b>FY 2023 Budget</b><br><br>\$45,198,515.00<br>3.53% increase from FY22  |

| School                        | Grades Served | SY22-23 Enrollment |
|-------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| C.A. Farley Elementary        | PreK-4        | 430                |
| Forest Avenue Elementary      | K-4           | 284                |
| Joseph L. Mulready Elementary | PreK-4        | 243                |
| David J. Quinn Middle School  | 5-7           | 558                |
| Hudson High School            | 8-12          | 808                |

## Student Population

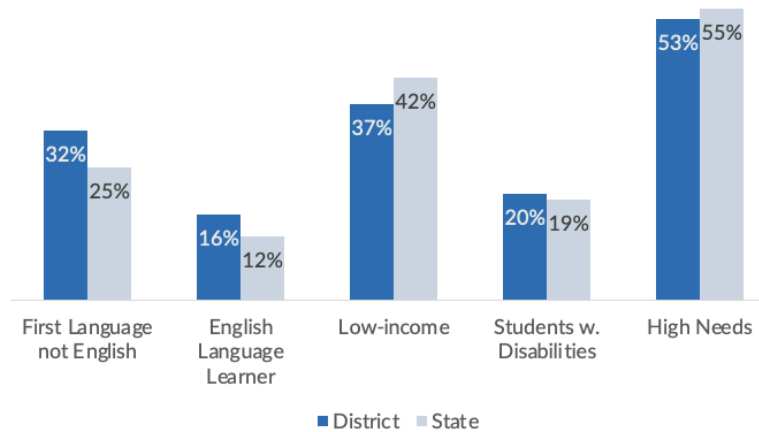
The current school year's enrollment is portrayed on the pie chart on the right. It is worth noting that racial identities do not necessarily account for the ethnic diversity of students. For example, a student could be of Brazilian ethnicity but identify racially as White. Currently, state-collected and analyzed data is not separately disaggregated by ethnicity.

2022-2023 Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



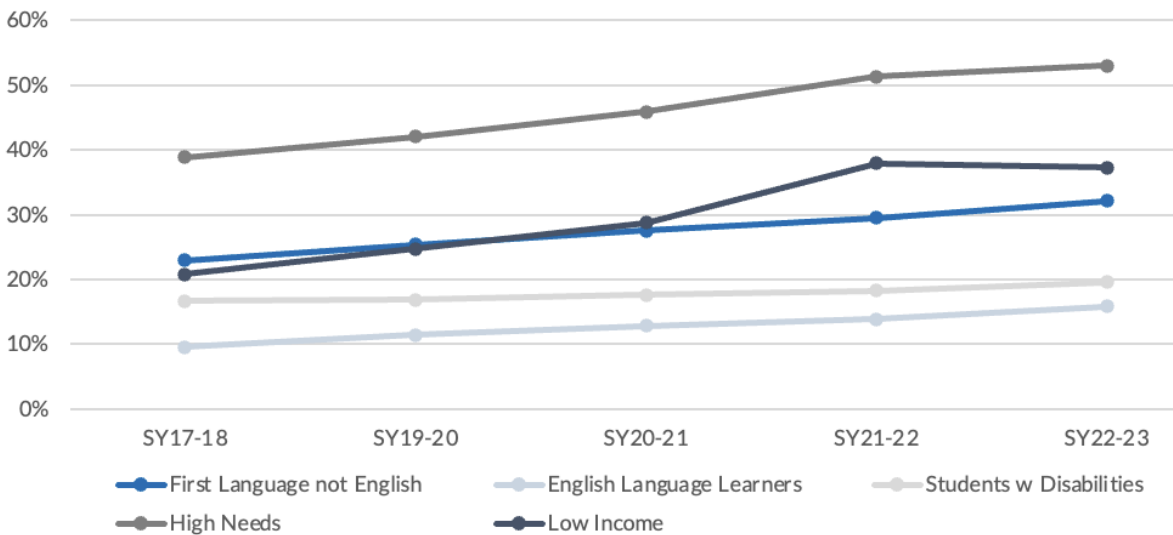


## Percent of total district enrollment in SY 22-23 for each subgroup compared to the state



Approximately half (53%) of all students enrolled in the Hudson School District are considered high needs, which is defined as students belonging to one or more of the following groups: English language learners, former English language learners, students with disabilities, or low-income students. District special student population enrollment is similar to that of the state. The district has a larger percentage of students whose first language is not English and English language learners compared to the state.

## Percent of total district enrollment by subgroup from SY 17-18 through SY 22-23

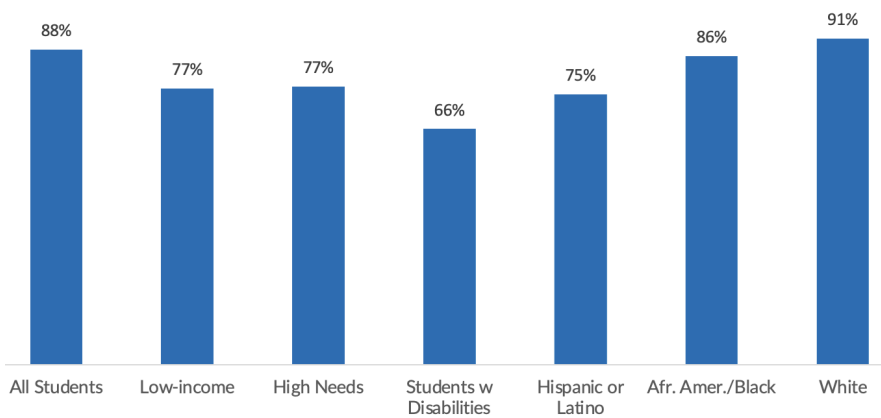


Note: The term *Economically Disadvantaged* has been used since 2015, but in the school year 2021-2022, the term *Low Income* has replaced it in state reporting. The change will “give school districts and charter schools the opportunity to claim the relatively small number of students statewide who qualify as low income under the 185% Federal Poverty Level standard”<sup>6</sup> but who were previously not identified. Additionally, homeless students reported by the district will be categorized as low income. For the purpose of discussing these students in the equity audit report, we will refer to them as *low income* unless discussing specific outcomes from when the term *economically disadvantaged* was still in use.

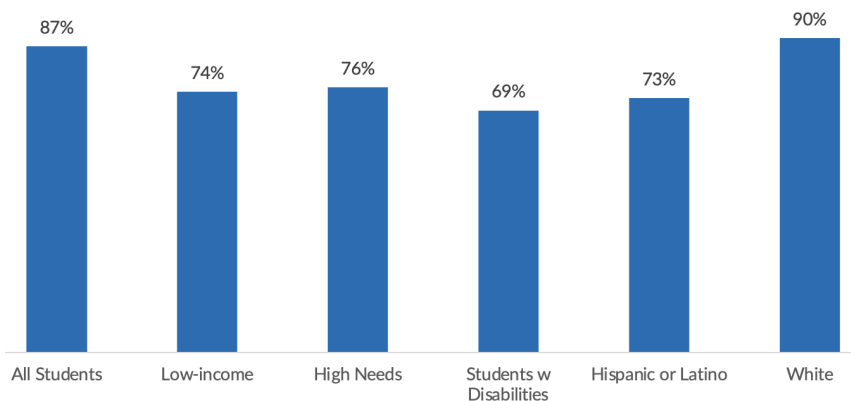
There has been an increase of high-needs students, students whose first language is not English, and economically disadvantaged students in the district from 2017 through 2023. There was also an increase in African American and Hispanic/Latino students in the past five years (see below).

| Student Population by Race/Ethnicity | SY 17-18 Percent of Enrollment | SY22-23 Percentage of Enrollment | Percent Change in the Past 5 Years |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| African American/Black               | 2%                             | 3%                               | 40%                                |
| Asian                                | 2%                             | 2%                               | -34%                               |
| Hispanic/Latino                      | 11%                            | 18%                              | 50%                                |
| Native American                      | 0%                             | 0%                               | -12%                               |
| White                                | 83%                            | 75%                              | -21%                               |
| Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander    | 0%                             | 0%                               | 0%                                 |
| Multiracial, Non-Hispanic            | 3%                             | 3%                               | -2%                                |

#### Four-Year Graduation Rate of Class of 2022 by Subgroup



#### Average Graduation Rates for Classes of 2018-2022 by Subgroup



The most recent four-year graduation rate, based on the class of 2022, for Hudson students is 88%, with a five-year average of 87%. Students with disabilities had the lowest graduation rate in 2022 at 66%, with a five-year average of 69%. *Note: Graduation rates for cohorts with fewer than six students are not reported; these graphics represent reported racial/ethnic subgroups.*

Note: all of the data in this section was retrieved from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education via their website at <https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/>

## ABOUT THE FINDINGS

Findings are presented by the domains of the Mass Insight District Equity Framework, as referenced in the [Methodology](#) and further depicted in the [Appendix](#). Findings include district strengths (key investments and initiatives that the district has already started or established that focus on equity, access, and opportunity for all students, staff, and/or families) and areas for improvement (areas where the district has more work to develop or fully implement equitable practices, policies, and structures that focus on equity, access, and opportunity for all students, staff, and/or families).

A few things to note about how focus group and interview quotes and survey responses are depicted in the Findings section:

- Direct quotes from stakeholders are contained within quotation marks and in **blue font**. Quotes were selected for their representation value of all quotes gathered throughout the equity audit process.
  - If a quote contains brackets [ ], it indicates that Mass Insight inserted the bracketed words to make the sentence more readable and/or grammatically correct.
  - If a quote contains ellipses (...), it indicates that part of the original quote was removed because it was repetitive or did not provide additional necessary or relevant information.
- Direct quotes from documents are **italicized**.
- Survey responses and the conclusions drawn from them are based on the responses of those representative stakeholders who participated by completing the survey. All district leaders, school leaders, school staff, middle school and high school students, families, and partners were eligible to complete the survey voluntarily. More information about surveys and focus group participation can be found in the [Methodology](#).

## DOMAIN 1: VISION, STRATEGY & CULTURE

### District administration has intentionally created a culture aligned with its vision and mission.

Hudson is a community with strong ties to its historical roots as a mill town and to its richly diverse demographics, with large numbers of residents of either Portuguese or Irish descent. The high school (grades 8-12), middle school (grades 5-7), and three elementary schools that make up Hudson Public Schools boast even more diversity, with increasing numbers of students of color and nearly one-third of students whose first language is not English. The district's dedicated educators and leaders have made equity a priority, ensuring that success for all students, regardless of demographic or ability, is front and center through a [clear mission, vision, and core values](#).

**Mission:** Delivering world-class education today for the global leaders of tomorrow.

**Vision:** Every student feels nurtured, challenged, and confident to embrace the future.

#### Core Values:

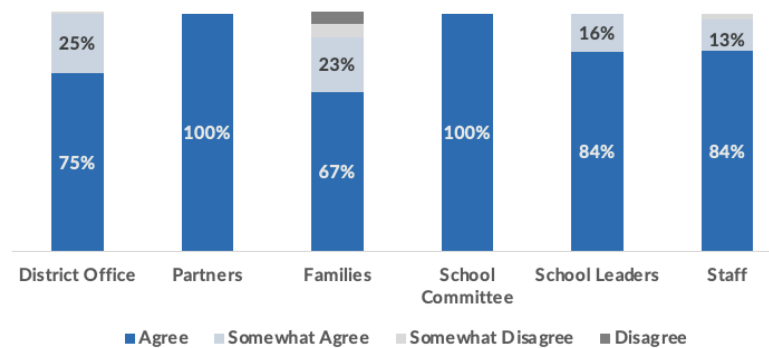
- **Excellence:** We work with integrity and hold ourselves accountable for exemplary service, outcomes, and interactions.
- **Strong Relationships:** We build a strong sense of community based on clear communication and partnerships.
- **Educating the Whole Child:** We recognize students as unique individuals and frame decisions with all students in mind.

The mission, vision, and core values, as well as the theory of action and current strategic objectives and priorities, are explicitly posted on the website, as well as included in student handbooks. Policy language in the student handbooks is related to these core beliefs, for example:

- **Academic expectations:** *“Although student abilities vary, each student is expected to produce his/her best work.”*<sup>4</sup>
- **Differentiated instruction:** *“Teachers will differentiate their instruction during class and in homework assignments based on students’ knowledge and progress.”*<sup>4</sup>
- **Athletics:** *“Because of the infinite number of individual differences in abilities and interests, the athletic program is comprehensive. All students who show an interest in the program will be encouraged to participate.”*<sup>5</sup>
- **Dress code:** *“The responsibility for the dress and appearance of the students will rest with individual students and parents... The administration is authorized to take action, with dignity and without shaming...”*<sup>5</sup>

The district has been increasing its focus on equity in recent years and is using this equity audit as a tool to explore all the elements of equity, as well as stakeholders’ perceptions of this work. In [announcing the launch of the equity audit](#) to the community, district leadership remained grounded in the mission and vision, asking all stakeholders to participate in surveys and focus groups to *“help the district understand what works well for them and areas we can improve to better support students’ experiences in our community.”* In reflection of the steps the district has already taken on its equity journey, the majority of survey respondents in every stakeholder group fully agreed with the statement: “I understand why the district is focused on becoming more equitable,” with small numbers, if any, disagreeing.

### I understand why the district is focused on becoming more equitable.



A major component of a district’s work toward greater equity is aligning on a shared definition of equity and how this work takes place. Though there is strong agreement on the reason for an equity focus, staff at the school level were more varied in their perceptions of whether a common understanding of equity is shared across the district:

- “Equity is always a topic of conversation. And I feel like they're always trying to promote that. That every student gets what they need.” (School staff)
- “The school makes a lot of effort to be equitable. Everyone has their own definition of what equity is.” (School leader)
- “Do I think there's a shared understanding of that in the district? I do not. At least not across all levels.” (School leader)
- “I would say the anti-racism work is not so clear. It's not such a clear district wide priority.” (School staff)

The district is deeply connected to the broader Hudson community, which has a substantial, if indirect, influence on the district’s ability to create the necessary conditions for equitable practices at schools. While the town largely supports the district, stakeholders referenced a disconnect between “a culture set by administration... focusing on equity and inclusion” and a town culture that is “very white and traditional.” Some participants mentioned the shifting demographics in Hudson as a contributing factor; a school committee member remarked, “I do think this is a huge problem... within the public and Hudson of not understanding what exactly equity is and why it’s so important.” One family member commented, “This is not just a school issue... for substantial change, the town and community need to change.”

A strength of the Hudson Public Schools is that the surrounding community is deeply embedded in the district’s staffing, operational, and governing structure, and it is evident that the district is intentionally setting the foundation for continued reflection and attention to the needs of its many members. District foundational statements, communication, and policies reveal an effort to engage all stakeholders in a community with a richly complex history. The following sections outline findings around the district’s strides to set, communicate, and actualize a shared vision for district equity.

### The district improvement plan and aligned school improvement plans contain data-driven and student-centered strategic objectives, priorities, and outcomes.

The current (2022-2025) District Improvement Plan outlines a clear connection from the mission, values, and vision to the theory of action (“If all Hudson Public Schools personnel work collaboratively to educate the whole child, then all students will succeed and become productive citizens”), to the strategic objectives, strategic priorities, and data-driven outcomes. Each category of Strategic Objectives (High Quality Instructional Practices, Educating the Whole Child, Innovative Educational Practices, and Climate and Culture) is linked to two or three connected Strategic Priorities and to one

concrete Outcome.

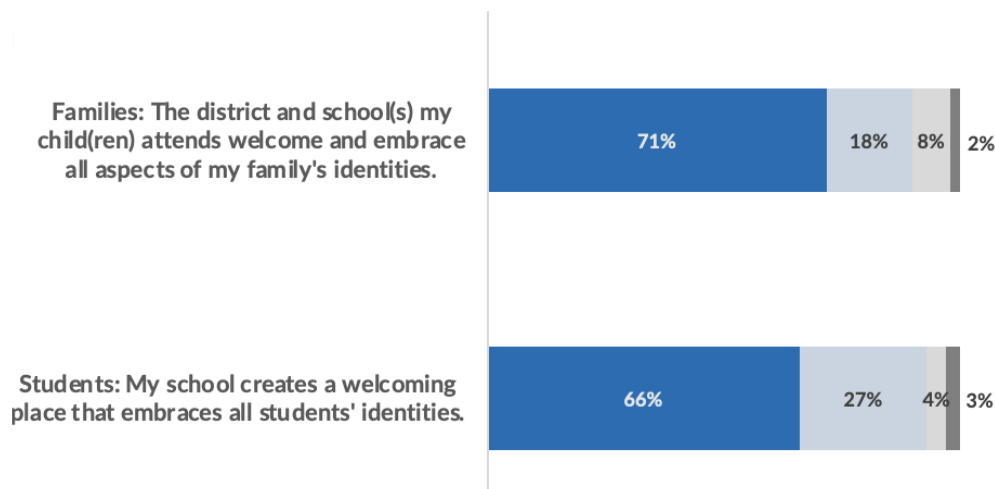
The three-year District Improvement Plan (DIP) is divided into yearly District Action Plans, with specific, measurable action steps related to each strategic priority. The process of reviewing and revising the DIP and Action Plans is conducted by the ELEVATE (Educational Leaders Establishing Vision Aiming Toward Excellence) team, which includes district and school leaders. Each school then creates its own School Improvement Plan in alignment with the district-wide strategic objectives, using a combination of goals from the DIP and school-specific goals created by the school council. The Action Plans are set up to be monitored via superintendent and school leader presentations to the school committee several times a year, related to progress on each of the data-oriented, measurable outcomes working toward each strategic priority. Additionally, each action step specifies which roles are “Resources” for that priority, indicating broad involvement of the various district and school stakeholders and shared responsibility for improvement.

Though the DIP does not specifically call out marginalized student populations aside from multilingual learners, there is a repeated commitment to educate, challenge, and support “ALL students”; to “develop a culture that promotes equity” and “eliminates opportunity gaps”; and an acknowledgment that social-emotional support and a connection to school and community are as important to school success as academic practices. These living, foundational documents show the district’s intention to work toward greater equity. One school committee member summarized, “The district-wide and the school-specific plans, which we just did this fall, are making a conscious effort to close achievement gaps.”

### School-level cultures have become increasingly welcoming, and more is needed to be inclusive of all aspects of identity and supportive of all students’ success.

Many students and parents described the school environments as welcoming. Students mentioned themes of feeling welcomed by their teachers: “When you walk into the building, almost all the teachers say hello to you.” Parents agreed about the school community overall: “Welcoming community. A lot of people are receptive to people that did not grow up there.” Other students and family members lauded the district’s efforts to be more inclusive:

- “They’re a relatively inclusive environment, especially for a big small town.”
- “Responding quickly and appropriately to any hate crimes, promoting clubs, inclusion.”
- “Our school really tries hard to make sure that all students despite their racial and ethnic background fit in.”
- “Doing ok for ethnic and linguistic minorities like us.”



It should be noted that for each of these survey items, families and students characterized schools as less welcoming as the students moved up through school levels.

Several students and family members mentioned that school cultures had improved since last year. One parent of a non-white student agreed with this positive assessment of the environment: “I believe they do a great job at making people feel included. People are nice and non-judgmental,” then added, “There was an issue last year, but the school resolved it quickly.” High school students noticed a change from last year as well:

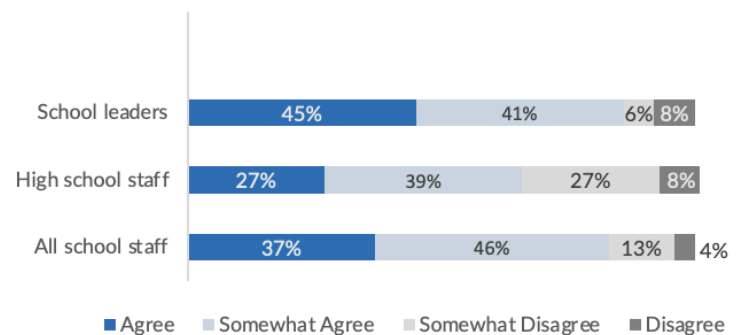
- “You see a lot more racism going on last year. This year is more calm, more peaceful, getting more along and being nicer to each other.”
- “Every day something racist would happen. This year it’s not so bad.”

This is likely due to a combination of the district’s efforts and timing regarding the pandemic; many districts saw increased social and emotional challenges among the student body in the 2021-2022 school year.

Some stakeholders recognize that although the district has made progress, there is still more work to be done, including parents who recognize the potential variation in experience based on family identity: “Well, I am a white, cis-gendered, hetero female of European descent. So, I feel like my culture and identity is respected. I worry more about students and families who are not like mine.” Other family members shared negative experiences: “My children have both been taunted at HHS because of their religious faith.” One family member commented, “Centering marginalized cultures, races, ethnicities, etc. -instead of highlighting them sometimes/occasionally/when there is a holiday - would be great....the schools can really help educate children and families about the importance of learning about and respecting all races, cultures, sexual orientation, identity, etc. and de-centering whiteness, English speaking, heterosexual, etc.”

Despite a large EL population and significant numbers of students with diverse learning needs, some stakeholders voiced concerns about a lack of shared accountability for all students among staff members. One administrator reflected that they are working to change a culture in which the ELD teachers just pull ELs out of the classroom and assume full responsibility for those students. They have seen improvement in that dynamic, especially at lower levels. One high school ELD teacher commented, “There is a segregation of sorts that is happening daily here, where our students who are not proficient in English and our students with disabilities are looked at as others and that it is the job of a para to take them or remove them.” Another wished that content teachers would reach out to them for collaboration, saying, “It seems that it’s our responsibility to take care of the students just because they don’t have the language.” Another ELD teacher noted the improvement in honoring student diversity but that it remains largely visual and still not ingrained in staff mindsets: “We have multicultural flags and our cafeteria hanging to represent all the different nations of where all our students are from, but we as a team are experiencing a lot of unawareness from our colleagues, or... no willingness sometimes to modify or just understand that our students can't be held to the same standard as a student who was born here and grew up here.”

**All staff at my school/my school's staff accept responsibility for the success of every student.**



A theme emerged across stakeholder groups of a desire to expand inclusion and centering beyond English learners and specifically the Portuguese-speaking demographic, the largest subgroup of the HPS community.

- “I’m not sure we have a shared definition of equity... We talk about our ELL population, and what we should be doing for them and how we should include them, but I think that that is only one part of equity.” (School leader)
- “The district wide vision of equity centers around ESL students exclusively and ignores other issues around gender, SES, LGBTQ students, etc.” (Staff member)



- “Stop only making things about the Portuguese families in town. I feel that just because that’s the ethnicity of the superintendent, it’s the only ethnicity that is acknowledged and recognized here.” (Family member)

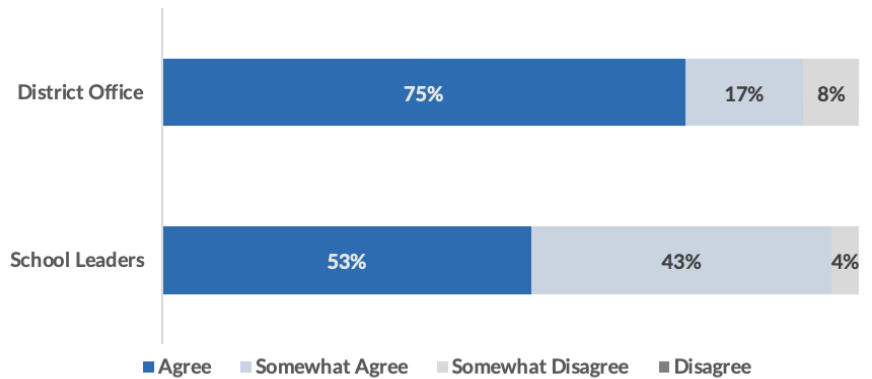
Spanish-speaking high school students, though they appreciated the support of the Heritage classes (for native or fluent Portuguese or Spanish speakers), also shared a feeling that Spanish was de-emphasized compared to Portuguese. One student commented, “They never do examples in Spanish, only in Portuguese. Why? In the community there are many who speak Spanish, they do translations in Portuguese but never in Spanish.”

In addition to the Heritage Portuguese and Spanish classes, the middle and high schools support identity-focused spaces for student leadership and community building. The members of Students Against Racism, a high school group that has been active in pushing for increased equity measures, reported that they have open lines of communication and collaboration with school leaders. The student LGBTQIA+ group also reported a general level of support from building administrators, though student members noted a lack of policy support. Both groups have time and space to meet during the school day, during ARC. Students in the middle school Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) also shared the feeling that the school supports their group: “Our school supports this. In every classroom that I’ve noticed, there’s a proud ally poster, even [staff] wears an ally pin.”

Yet both middle and high school students reported in focus groups and surveys that their schools, especially at the level of individual interaction, have work to do to be fully accepting of LGBTQIA+ students. When asked what the district could do to improve their experience, students responded:

- “Many students are openly homophobic and transphobic. The school does little to correct this, and I’m not sure they’re even aware it’s an issue, despite the prevalence. It’s relatively easy to notice, and more should be done to discourage this behavior.”
- “Use gender neutral pronouns and addresses (folks, guys, their in lieu of his/her) & welcome gender non conforming students into typically cisgender spaces (discussion/project groups, social circles, etc).”
- “People having more awareness of LGBTQ kids and stop using the word gay in a bad way.”

The district supports inclusive spaces for students and families.



There was a pattern of students sharing that teachers often used “deadnames,” the name a student used before transitioning, the use of which can be invalidating or traumatic to non-binary or transgender students. Students also shared comments similar to this survey response: “I just wish the teacher would use my pronouns.” One student commented, “There’s a difference between passive allyship and active allyship. It’s easy to leave it in the hands of the students. It speaks to a broader issue—they should be sort of educated from the get-go, it shouldn’t be trans people’s responsibility to educate people.”

The leaders and staff at Hudson Public Schools have worked to set a strong and intentional foundation for its ongoing equity journey. Stakeholders at all levels are clearly invested, a strength that will carry the district forward in its next steps to ensure that the mission, vision, and core values are fully experienced by all members of the school community.

## DOMAIN 2: EQUITABLE STUDENT ACCESS & OUTCOMES

District policies, practices, and mindsets reflect a commitment to equity as evidenced by disaggregated data monitoring practices and resulting actions that focus on decreasing disparities and ensuring equitable representation in student access, success, and outcomes.

Two district strategic priorities demonstrate Hudson’s Public School's commitment to equitable student outcomes: High Quality Instructional Practices and Innovative Educational Practices. In the 2022-2025 District Improvement Plan, the related Outcomes the district has committed to are:

- High Quality Instructional Practices: *“By 2025, 100% of our teaching staff will monitor the use of data at the classroom and school level to ensure the establishment of a positive culture of data inquiry.”*
- Innovative Educational Practices: *“By 2025, all schools will refine and implement a system of supports for struggling students to promote academic success and increase access to rigorous learning experiences by 50%.”*

This evidence is consistent with the district’s desire during the equity audit process to prioritize the needs of multilingual students and the examined student outcome data (i.e., attendance, graduation rates, and MCAS data).

### **Attendance, graduation, and MCAS data show patterns of disparities for some student groups.**

#### ***Average attendance is high for all subgroups. Chronic absenteeism is higher for marginalized student populations.***

In the 2021-22 school year, the average student attendance rate was 92%, with an average number of absences of 13.6 days. Students with high needs have an average attendance rate of 90%, with an average number of absences of 16.4, which is about 3 more days than the average number of absences for the district population. While these attendance rates in the district are high, a closer look at chronic absenteeism data shows that students classified as high needs are chronically absent more than the average student population. Six percent of all students missed 20% or more of the 2021-22 school year. Rates of chronic absenteeism were higher for high needs subgroups, including ELs (10%), students from low-income families (9%), and students with disabilities (9%). Typically attendance rates positively correlate with graduation rates; however, graduation data for students in selected populations reflect gaps in student success for those in special populations.

|                          | Average Attendance Rate | Average Number of Days Absent | Chronically Absent (20% or more) |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| High Needs Students      | 92%                     | 13.6                          | 6%                               |
| Students w. Disabilities | 90%                     | 16.4                          | 9%                               |
| English Learners         | 90%                     | 16.8                          | 9%                               |
| Low Income Students      | 91%                     | 15.1                          | 10%                              |

*Graduation data and dropout demonstrates that students in selected populations are not graduating at the same rate as all students.*

Hudson High School seniors had a four-year graduation rate of 88% in 2022. However, English language learners, high needs students, and students with disabilities graduated at a substantially lower rate. English language learners had a four-year graduation rate of 57%, about 30 percentage points lower than the student average. Students with disabilities had a slightly higher four-year graduation rate of 66%. Low-income students and high needs students overall graduated at a rate of 77%.

Subgroups with lower graduation rates have correspondingly higher dropout rates (though 5% of all students in the class of 2022, including 10% of high needs students overall and 21% of students with disabilities, remained in school to work towards a diploma). ELs stand out as having a high dropout rate, 29% for the class of 2022, tracking an average of 26% over the last five years.

**Four-Year Graduation and Dropout Rates for the Class of 2022 by Selected Population**

|                                 | <b># of Students<br/>in Cohort</b> | <b>% Graduated</b> | <b>% Dropped Out</b> |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| <b>All Students</b>             | 168                                | 88%                | 7%                   |
| <b>High Needs Students</b>      | 88                                 | 77%                | 11%                  |
| <b>Students w. Disabilities</b> | 29                                 | 66%                | 14%                  |
| <b>English Learners</b>         | 21                                 | 57%                | 29%                  |
| <b>Low Income Students</b>      | 73                                 | 77%                | 12%                  |

*MCAS data in the 2021-22 and the 2020-21 school years demonstrate lower rates of students who are exceeding or meeting expectations in special populations compared to other student groups and district averages.*

On the 2022 MCAS, high needs students (students with disabilities, ELs or former ELs, and low income students) achieved Meeting or Exceeding Expectations at rates between 7 and 28 percentage points lower than the class averages in both ELA and mathematics. These patterns are also seen in the 2021 MCAS data. The table below includes MCAS data for the previous two years by selected populations and race/ethnicity, for grades 4 and 7 (the last two grades of elementary school and middle school at Hudson) and grade 10 (the final year of MCAS and only tested year in high school).

| Student Population         | Grade 4                                     |      |   |      | Grade 7                                     |      |   |      | Grade 10                                    |      |   |      |
|----------------------------|---|------|---|------|---|------|---|------|---|------|---|------|
|                            | % Meeting or Exceeding MCAS ELA Expectation |      | % Meeting or Exceeding MCAS Math Expectations |      | % Meeting or Exceeding MCAS ELA Expectation |      | % Meeting or Exceeding MCAS Math Expectations |      | % Meeting or Exceeding MCAS ELA Expectation |      | % Meeting or Exceeding MCAS Math Expectations |      |
|                            | 2021  | 2022 | 2021  | 2022 | 2021  | 2022 | 2021  | 2022 | 2021  | 2022 | 2021  | 2022 |
| All Students               | 53%   | 30%  | 35%   | 26%  | 35%   | 38%  | 31%   | 29%  | 63%   | 57%  | 50%   | 52%  |
| Students with Disabilities | 28%   | 8%   | 10%   | 8%   | 9%  | 9%   | 12%   | 6%   | 27%   | 9%   | 6%  | 12%  |
| English Learners           | 14%   | 4%   | 4%  | 4%   | 0%  | 5%   | 0%  | 0%   | 0%  | 0%   | 0%  | 0%   |
| Low Income                 | 39%   | 12%  | 21%   | 11%  | 16%   | 23%  | 10%   | 17%  | 47%   | 35%  | 18%   | 29%  |
| High Needs                 | 37%   | 12%  | 19%   | 12%  | 15%   | 23%  | 12%   | 17%  | 38%   | 29%  | 17%   | 27%  |
| Hispanic/Latino            | 32%   | 3%   | 24%   | 13%  | 11%   | 30%  | 18%   | 23%  | 34%   | 28%  | 19%   | 20%  |
| White                      | 57%   | 36%  | 36%   | 29%  | 39%   | 38%  | 31%   | 29%  | 67%   | 61%  | 55%   | 57%  |

*Gaps for ELs increase with grade level.*

On the 2022 MCAS, 4th grade ELs lagged behind their peers by 26 percentage points in ELA and 22 points in mathematics. In 7th grade, the gap was 33 points in ELA and 29 points in mathematics; in 10th grade, it was 57 and 52 points, with no ELs meeting or exceeding expectations.

*Rates of achievement for students with disabilities are consistently lower than their peers'.*

In 2022, rates of students with disabilities meeting or exceeding expectations on MCAS assessments trended in the single digits. In 2021 there were pockets of higher rates: 28% in 4th grade ELA and 27% in 10th grade ELA; for those two assessments, rates for all students were also higher than average, at 53% and 63%, respectively.

*Low-income students showed increased gains in 2022 as grade levels rise, yet gaps persist.*

On the 2022 ELA MCAS, low-income students met or exceeded expectations at rates of 12% in 4th grade, 23% in 7th grade, and 35% in 10th grade. For mathematics, the rates were 11% in 4th grade, 17% in 7th grade, and 29% in 10th grade. This subgroup remained behind the class averages by 12-18 percentage points in 4th and 7th grade, ending with a 22-23 percentage point gap in 10th grade.

### **Hudson's special education evaluation and implementation systems support students and families.**

The district follows state-mandated annual monitoring and reporting protocols regarding student records and individual educational plans. As with every Massachusetts district, Hudson receives a [fully coordinated program review](#) every six years given by the state. The review includes district self-submission of student record review and policy documentation, an onsite review focused on areas of concern, and findings of non-compliance resulting in corrective action. The review areas are special education, civil rights, career vocational/technical education, and EL education. Every three years, the review will be for special education only and the areas of non-compliance. In the last review, conducted in the 2020-2021 school year, Hudson was found to be in compliance with all criteria, with no corrective action required.

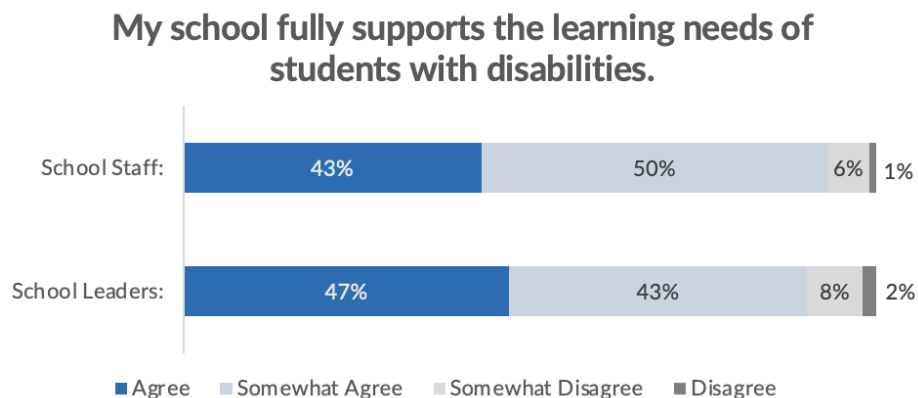
The district currently has a robust special education program that includes assessments, support, and student provisions. Students can be referred for evaluation by either teachers or parents. The special education department receives the student information and the six-week outcome of any tiered interventions that have been established. The department then determines what type of evaluation is appropriate for the student, and after interventions are established, the department monitors the student for the support needed. Families are connected to these supports if outside district support is necessary, such as outside counseling or psychotherapy. Families also have the option to join SEPAC, which is the Special Education Parent Advisory Council, to gain information on special education resources available. However, staff reports that, at times, communication among departments interferes with their ability to meet special education students' needs.

Once students are receiving special education services, their progress is closely monitored via yearly meetings of their IEP or 504 teams and on an ongoing basis by the educators supporting them in the classroom. SPED department staff members reported detailed data-collection systems:

- “A lot of the data collection is the day-to-day work, whatever the goals and objectives are and what we’re working on in the classroom, and then there’s a lot of formative and summative evaluation.”
- “I definitely pay a lot of attention to the student grades. And I have a bunch of my kids on my caseload are in academic support class, so that helps a lot where I can sit with them and go through their Google Classroom, sit and make sure that their assignments are up to date, and then I can also go in and look at the quality of work that they're doing. And that's where I get a lot of my data from, depending on what their goals are and what I'm trying to achieve with them.”
- “I have a whole spreadsheet that I put my data in after every session. It has each child's objective on it. And then right next to it, I can put the date and the percentage and so that way I can look and I can say, Oh, I haven't taken data on this in a week or two, I need to take data. So that's how I do it. And then I'm able to report out progress notes.”

Data monitoring for students in special populations also considers additional factors that can compound special education status, for example, students who may be new to the school district and have not acclimated to school structures. As reported by a district leader, “We’re starting to ask the question whether or not it is really about special education? Is it really about English learner status, or one of the defining makers of struggle here is income status.”

Overall, about 90% of school leaders and 93% of school staff agree or somewhat agree that their school fully supports the learning needs of students with disabilities.

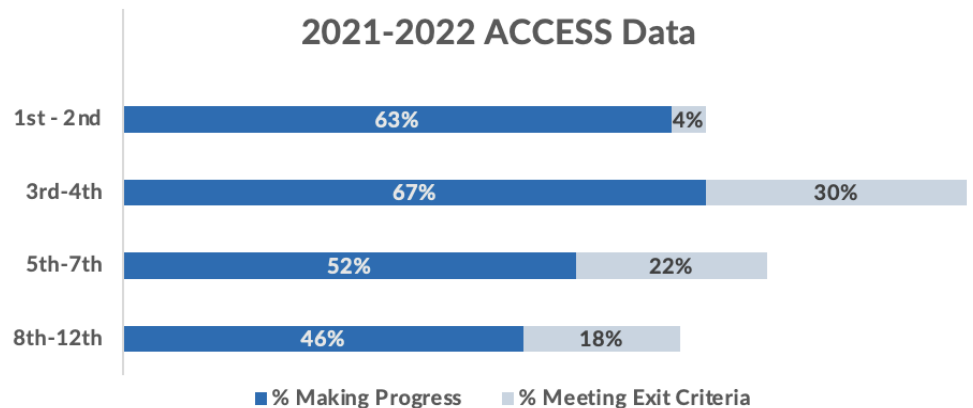


## Hudson is still developing supports for a growing English learner population.

*ACCESS data shows ELs making progress and exiting ELD services, especially in later elementary years, and at lower rates in upper grades.*

ACCESS (a national assessment of EL language progress) data shows many students across grade bands making progress, decreasing somewhat as grades go up. In 2021-2022, elementary-level ELs made progress at rates of 63% in 1st and 2nd grade and 67% in 3rd and 4th grade. In middle school, 52% of

ELs made progress, and 46% in high school. In 3rd and 4th grade in particular, a combined 97% of ELs were either making progress or meeting exit criteria (showing enough language skill to “test out” of ELD support), with 30% of students meeting exit criteria in the final two years of elementary school at Hudson. The middle school had 22% of ELs meeting exit criteria, for a total of 74% of students either making progress or meeting exit criteria. In high school, 18% of students met exit criteria, for a total of 64% in both categories combined.



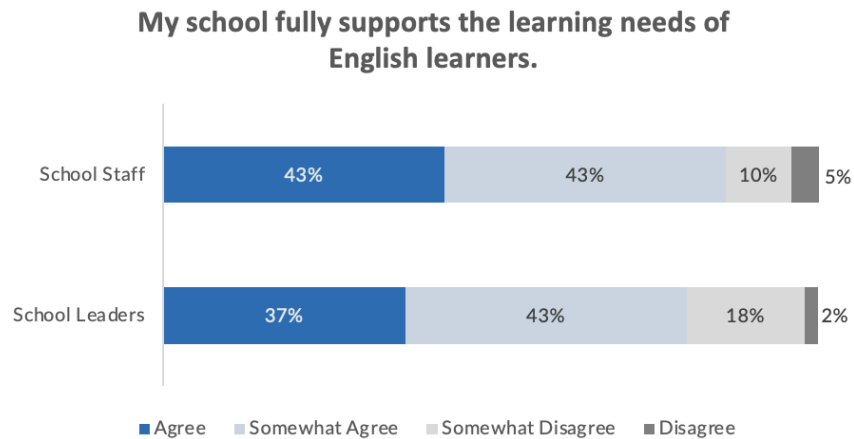
*Staff shared a need for more support from the district and collaboration between ELD, general education, and special education staff and leaders.*

The district has recently set strategies for teaching ELs, or MLLs (multilingual learners), as a focus for district-wide professional development, which has been overall successful in building up teachers’ toolkits and mindsets. (See [Domain 4](#) for more discussion on this topic.) Yet, school leaders and staff reflected on ongoing challenges. One school leader commented, “Our English learner population is certainly an area of growth for us and a challenge. We get students who come from a variety of backgrounds, variety of schooling experiences...We have students who come to us who can’t read or write in their first language. So the real challenge for us is, how do we support the students and get them to a place where they are progressing?”

English Language Development (ELD) teachers at the secondary level shared a desire for better support systems for both EL students and the teachers who work with them:

- “Because our population is so high, our kids are equitably distributed throughout the school. There’s no teacher in this school not teaching ELL students....So I think what happens is that the content teachers are flying solo and on their own and are overwhelmed by the needs of the kids that we have.”
- “They’re not being accommodated. They’re not being scaffolded, they’re not being given the supports that they need to access the content even though we all know that they’re perfectly capable of actually accessing the content, once they are given the building blocks of language in order to do that.”
- “I think for our students, I’m still not seeing the kind of treatment that special ed students, for example, are getting in terms of services....I don’t think that they’re equitable. We don’t have enough systems in place district-wide for our ELL students.”

When asked, “Which policies or practices should be re-examined or re-visited to ensure greater equity?,” 45% of school staff, 43% of school leaders, and 46% of district office staff responded in the affirmative for “Supports for English language learners.” School-based staff members were mixed, although mostly agreeing or somewhat agreeing, that their school fully supports the learning needs of English learners.



Additionally, there was a general feeling from staff that it can be difficult to get ELs special education testing or services if teachers suspect there may be a disability at play. An ELD teacher acknowledged, “There’s a very fine line, and we want to be careful about over identifying ELs as SPED because often what seems to be a lack of progress is just a matter of language development and time....there’s definitely misunderstanding on both sides, where the expectation is that students are brought up to speed within a couple of years,” then added, “On the flip side, it’s very difficult, when we do suspect that a student has more than just a language need, to service that student appropriately....When functionally in the classroom students aren’t getting what they need, there’s no process to support them getting what they need.” Other teachers in various focus groups agreed, commenting:

- “It’s difficult for our ELL students who we suspect if they have special needs issues, it’s very difficult to get them started on the special ed half. They want students to be here for at least two years before giving a lot of services or giving any special needs services.”
- “It’s been very discouraged to have kids on dual tracks, to have kids identified as ELL students specifically to have them identified as having special education needs.”
- “I have a lot of interaction with the ELL students, and it’s very, very hard to get them to qualify for an Ed plan. And oftentimes, we’ve tried for years starting in the early years...And what we’re told is, it’s language based....And then they went right up to the middle school, and they were picked up within the first month.”
- “Some students I can perceive might have some cognitive problem or learning disability, but we don’t have staff that is able to test them in their language. All the tests...everything is in English. So we really need people that are able to read to the kids and communicate with them so they can be tested for dyslexia.”

**While disaggregated data is accessible to district leaders and staff to understand students’ needs and create substantial improvements, not all data structures are proven effective.**

The district has not yet fully implemented a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). The MTSS process used at Hudson Public Schools is responsive to student needs by using a three-tiered system for academic support, social-emotional behavioral support, and attendance support. In accordance with the widely accepted [MTSS framework](#), Tier 1 includes universal support for all students, Tier 2 is targeted support for some students, and Tier 3 is intensive support for a few students. Students can move throughout the tiers as needed in a subject, class, or skill. While the support provided to students is impactful, the data structures used to support this system are not yet effective due to a variety of factors,

such as a lack of training or resources for those responsible for implementing the system or a lack of buy-in from stakeholders such as teachers and administrators.

As reported in focus groups, each school has an instructional support team (IST) that is composed of guidance counselors, adjustment counselors, and principals to determine student support for academic and social-emotional needs. Data is collected through a variety of assessments and inventories and discussed with the team. The IST maintains a log of student interventions and progress to share with the special education department. After the IST plans for student interventions, the team reconvenes to discuss the student every six weeks as needed.

Teachers and school leaders describe IST as a critical and collaborative support for students. Teachers also report having time to talk about student needs during team meetings. Yet staff members report a lack of access to or understanding of an MTSS system, sharing,

- “In general, there really isn’t necessarily a clear-cut, easy process for teachers to say this student is struggling because I’ve collected this data, and this is who to go to for MTSS... We do not have that in place currently.”
- “There’s a form, and team time is good for us to share, but there should be other people involved in the process... It needs to be targeted. [There is] no formal process for interventions or data collection.”
- “The IST process [is] kind of a mystery to me still. But basically, there’s some kind of meeting that happens between administrators and school counselors, where they discuss students who appear to be having either behavioral or academic issues... They don’t really consult the teachers or the special ed teachers involved.”

Additionally, several stakeholders mentioned an over-reliance on referral for special education testing when students are struggling, often without documented and data-driven interventions attempted first. A district leader commented, “Students in the [special education] referral process should simultaneously be in MTSS/RTI process. Currently, the effort is only for the referral process. [We] could gain data also to see how additional supports make or don’t make an impact.”

Finally, there are not always opportunities for district staff, teachers in particular, to review data to improve student learning, which is a key underpinning of a successful MTSS. In surveys, over 85% of staff agreed or somewhat agreed that their school proactively identifies students’ social-emotional, academic, and developmental needs. However, 20% of staff agreed and 33% of staff somewhat agreed that they have the opportunity to regularly collaborate with colleagues to monitor disaggregated student data to identify students’ academic, social-emotional, identity, and behavioral needs and successful outcomes. A district-level staff member explained: “We are trying to... develop better systems by which we look at data in a more consistent, organized, and thoughtful way. I would say from a data perspective, we are not a particularly nimble organization.” A school staff member confirmed this area of growth: “We collect a lot of data, but it’s not always consistent and there isn’t a district prescribed process around data.”

### **The recommendation process for advanced academics and honors courses results in limited access for students of color and multilingual students.**

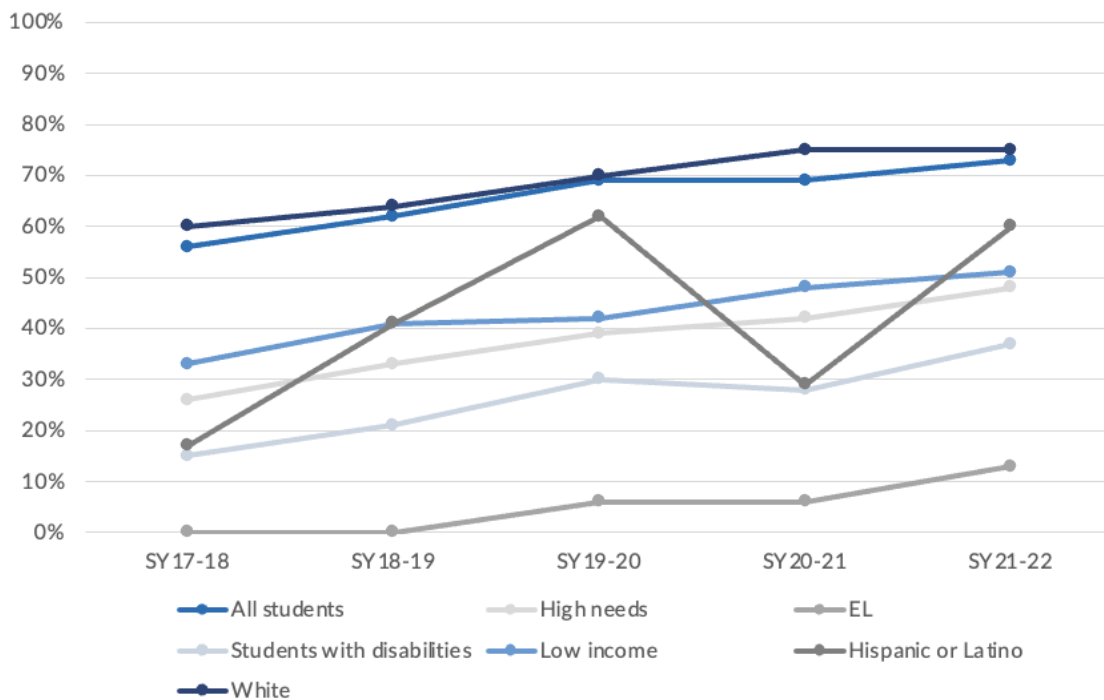
According to the 2022-2023 Program of Studies, Hudson recommends that students prepare for college by enrolling in honors, Advanced Placement (AP), and/or dual credit courses. Honors courses are subject to more rigorous grading standards on major assignments. AP courses are regulated by the College Board and prepare students for the AP exams for college credit. Hudson also has a partnership with Quinsigamond Community College to offer online college credit courses to juniors and seniors. Juniors and seniors can take one three-credit class each semester, meaning each student earns an honors credit at Hudson and college credit at the community college, up to 12 credits in two years.



Hudson has focused on increasing access to and representation in its advanced courses in recent years, including with innovative programs like Project Lead the Way, a pre-engineering initiative funded via state grants; the percentage of students completing advanced courses in science and technology was 42% in the 2021-2022 school year, rising from 22% the previous year and just 11% five years prior.

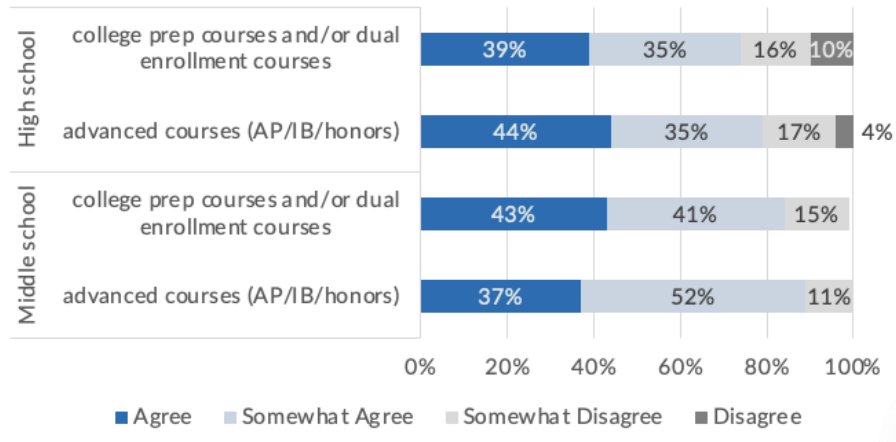
In the last five years, rates of completing advanced courses ([reported by DESE](#) as including Advanced Placement, Project Lead the Way, dual enrollment courses, and other selected rigorous courses) have risen steadily for all subgroups. High needs students overall and low income students nearly substantially increased their completion rates (26 to 48% and 33 to 51%, respectively); students with disabilities more than doubled (15% to 37%), and ELs went from 0% to double digits (13%). Students identifying as Hispanic or Latino had a 17% advanced course completion rate five years ago and increased to 60% last year.

**Percent of subgroups completing advanced courses over the last five years**



Yet, staff members are still seeing gaps in access for all students, which are evident in the data despite gains for all subgroups. When asked if all students have access to advanced courses, college prep courses, or dual enrollment courses, 13-14% of staff disagreed or somewhat disagreed, including higher percentages at the high school level: 21% (advanced courses) and 26% (college prep and/or dual enrollment). A school leader reflected on this area of growth: **“I think we are underrepresented in many facets, primarily SPED in language ability or English language learning status, in our honors in AP level coursework.”**

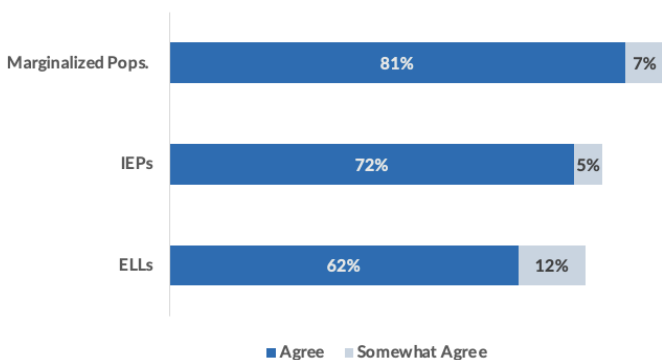
## All students have access to:



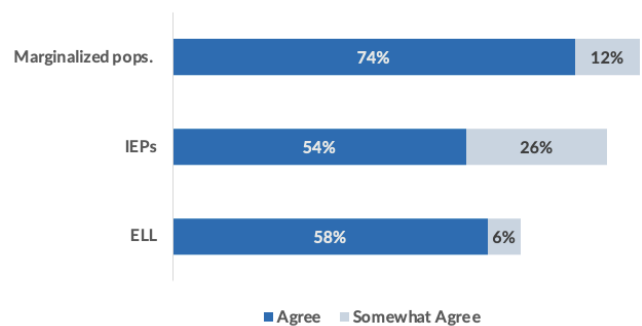
Middle school staff members identified advanced course completion gaps beginning before students are even in high school, with early tracking of students into leveled math classes: “A huge problem is the way that Hudson starts to level students in math at middle school without giving students or families information about the repercussions of that. Suppose they are not placed in a math course that is considered advanced. In that case, they are never going to gain access to certain courses once they get to high school... Students had no idea that not getting placed into the right math class in 7th grade was going to affect them as a junior or senior in high school.”

In focus groups, high school students reported teachers talking to them about honors or AP courses, including counselors, content directors, or AP teachers coming into their classes to review the course offerings and prerequisites. Students shared mixed awareness of the enrollment process for advanced or dual enrollment courses, which for all courses requires a teacher recommendation, a potential barrier to access for some students, especially those in marginalized populations.

Students: I am aware of advanced courses.



Students: Do you have the opportunity to take advanced courses?



In a focus group, a high school staff member brought up the question of support for students beyond enrollment: “Now while it’s nice to check a box that the students are actually in those classes, what is happening to them once they get there? And that data is available...it does not show that once they’re there, they are getting adequate support enough to be successful, especially in the advanced placement courses.”

Hudson has made substantial strides in equitably serving its increasingly diverse student population, from data monitoring practices to services for selected populations to advanced course access. With a staff and leadership committed to equity, the district will continue this trend toward supporting all students' needs.

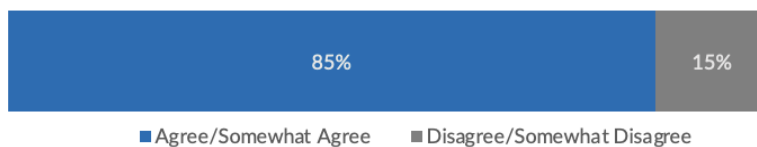
## DOMAIN 3: STUDENT READINESS TO LEARN

The district has social-emotional learning (SEL) programs, specialized staff, community resources, and a curriculum to support students' SEL needs.

The district has invested in materials and resources to ensure a safe learning environment and the development of students' social-emotional learning. Psychologists and adjustment counselors are available to students across school levels for support throughout the school day. At the high school, students can access the Network of Care - Massachusetts through the Bridge Program. Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition or BRYT Program offers specialized classrooms, mental health, and educational support for students returning from prolonged absences due to a serious mental health condition. BRYT combines clinical support (counseling, crisis intervention, psychoeducation, referrals), academic support (partnership with teachers to develop an academic plan, help students manage school work, and provide basic tutoring), family support (frequent communication with families, crisis support, education, and leadership development), and care coordination (transition planning, coordination and communications with school staff and community providers). In addition to BRYT, high school and other grade band staff work with families who understand school and out-of-school needs to connect them to the appropriate resources. Some families celebrated the number of resources available, as described by one parent, "An extra boost to our building [is] having a full-time school psychologist and full-time school adjustment counselor; that's new, and that's been really fabulous." At the elementary school level, parents can allow their students to access pediatric support if needed, as referenced by a school leader: "Parents sign a medical release for me to talk to pediatricians and social workers. So it's very common for me to call outside providers."

At the system level, the district's School Health & Safety Advisory Council serves as a community forum to address the topics of physical and mental health, wellness, safety, and nutrition that influence student success and learning. The council meets quarterly and discusses issues directly or indirectly impacting the student learning experience. Chaired by the superintendent, the committee is heavily engaged in reviewing policies and procedures, including but not limited to the Wellness Policy for the district. Moreover, the district uses the Model for Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child to define student services and support integration. During the stakeholder engagement process, families and students expressed an appreciation for the organization of resources available for families experiencing financial difficulties and food insecurities. The following survey response captures family commentary regarding the number of public services to support their needs.

### Family: My child(ren)'s school supports their academic, social-emotional, identity, and behavior.



The district also invested in the implementation of the Choose Love curriculum across school levels in 2022 to support students' SEL development. The Choose Love curriculum is aligned with the CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) framework, Common Core, and the American School Counselor Association. The curriculum incorporates neuroscience and positive psychology to teach mindfulness, character, and emotional intelligence for students PK-12. To support staff buy-in and program implementation of the Choose Love curriculum, the district has provided professional development to staff from the curriculum developers, which has overall been positively received. As reported by staff members, "Never seen so much buy in on any program in my life as I've seen for this program."

Despite positive reviews of the Choose Love professional development, school staff reported that the training does not necessarily translate to impactful classroom instruction; more specifically, the Choose Love curriculum includes topics that some students and teachers may not yet be ready to engage in together. Scripts are provided to teachers, but some teachers reported that the scripts appear to be disingenuous engagement from teachers, thus impacting student engagement. One staff member reported, “Hard to sit in PD and feel like we don’t know how we are going to do it. I know that practically the plans are there, I don’t know that I feel prepared to engage in that level of vulnerability with students or ask that of them. I don’t know how I feel about that being asked of me or asking students to do that.”

Students in middle and high school echoed this sentiment, many sharing that they felt uncomfortable engaging deeply with potentially emotional topics.

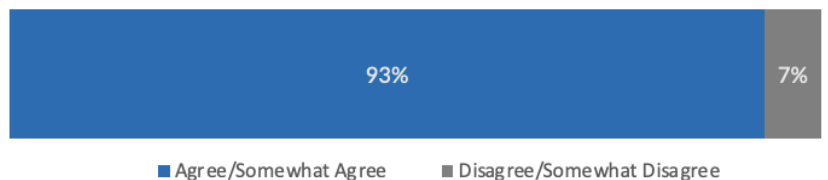
- “You’re in a room with people you don’t really know.”
- “People just sit there and listen but they don’t really listen. Choose Love is what a teacher is saying but not really what the kids will say.”
- “It’s a bad idea because you’re talking about your problems in front of other people, you can’t just trust anybody with that. Teachers try to make you share really personal stuff, trying to make a connection with the whole class. There isn’t an option to not participate. Some of the stuff gets upsetting, if you start to cry they don’t do anything, just let you cry in a corner.”

### Students report an overall positive experience at Hudson Public Schools.

Students in middle and high school reported that student support was a positive experience at Hudson Public Schools. As evidenced in Mass Insight’s student surveys, 93% of middle and high school students who completed the survey agreed their school creates a welcoming place that embraces students’ identities. Student focus group participants validated these results:

- “Most teachers are very understanding white women that understand different perspectives.”
- “Most of the teachers, even if they’re not nice in giving school work, they’re nice in general, I feel like they would accept us.”

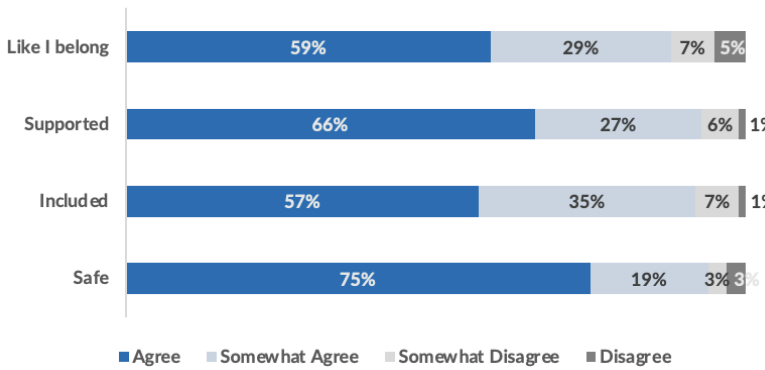
#### Students: My school creates a welcoming place that embraces all students' identities.



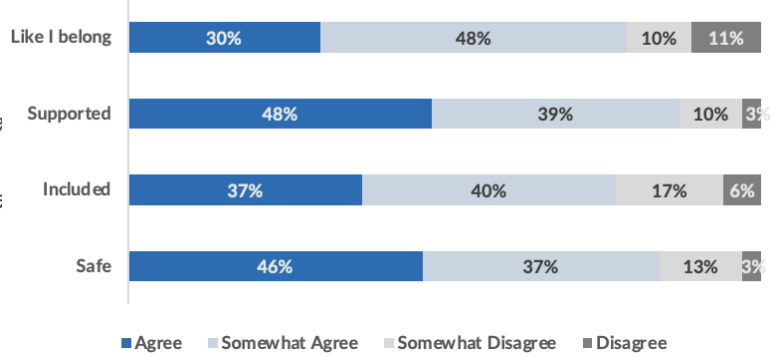
While these results are promising, some students report feeling differently. A student with different learning styles reported “I hyper-focus on things, my math teacher doesn’t really understand that. I’m listening but I’m not looking and don’t really want to talk, and she doesn’t understand that. She says, put that away, but I need to concentrate and I don’t have the guts to tell her that, and it doesn’t make me feel welcomed.” Other students report that the staff are not always welcoming:

- “They’re out to get you, like everything you do is a problem”
- “You can see they have no compassion for people. They don’t think [about] what’s happening with you, what’s going on at home, they just want to suspend you or give you detention. We’re in a community, students and teachers, everyone’s supposed to be talking to each other, but nobody’s really talking to each other.”

### Middle School Students: At school, I feel:



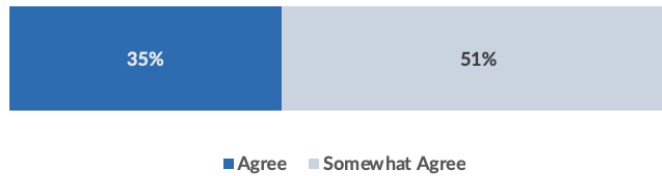
### High School Students: At school, I feel:



## Hudson Public Schools uses an MTSS to support students' belonging and programming needs.

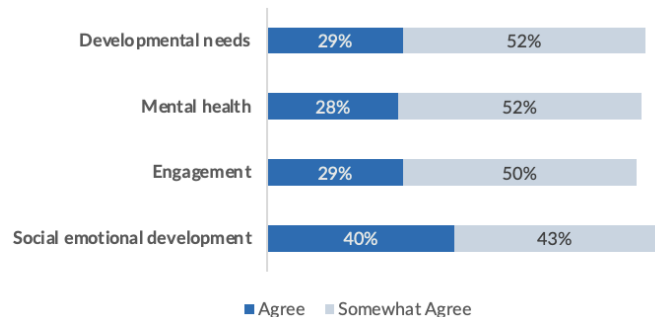
At the school level, students' needs are proactively monitored to support socioemotional learning and engagement. According to the survey results presented below, more than 85% of staff agree or somewhat agree that their school proactively identifies students' social-emotional, academic, and developmental needs. Additionally, staff also agree that their school has systems and procedures in place to support students' development after identifying the support needed.

### School Staff: My school proactively identifies students' social-emotional, academic, and developmental needs.



At the elementary level, weekly meetings are held with school support staff to discuss student needs and additional support. At the middle school level, attendance is closely monitored to support student engagement. Similar practices are used at the high school level to support student learning, in particular, discipline and attendance data are examined. The Choose Love curriculum is also used as a monitoring system for students' belonging and programming needs, although teachers report it is not always effective: *“At the elementary level, all teachers did the pre-assessment. But that’s more of like what the kids know and not necessarily a screening tool. So other than like our SST processes of who were [brought] forth for social, emotional, or different programs we have; there’s no global assessment.”*

### School Staff: My school has a system that supports students'...



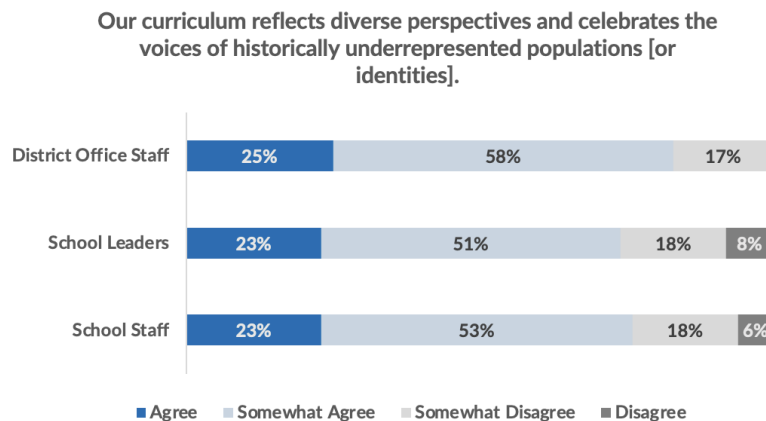
Overall, Hudson Public Schools has invested time and resources to support students' social and emotional development to create a safe learning environment. The Choose Love curriculum has been established as the

district-wide social-emotional support curriculum. As reported by staff survey items, schools have systems to identify and monitor students' mental health, and developmental and academic needs. The effectiveness of these systems is also supported by student focus groups and survey data, and families also overwhelmingly agree that Hudson schools support students' socio-emotional, developmental, and academic needs.

## DOMAIN 4: CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY SUSTAINING INSTRUCTION

### District stakeholders report recent progress in classroom instruction that connects with a diverse learner population.

The district office staff, school leaders, and school staff were aligned in their survey responses to “Our curriculum reflects diverse perspectives and celebrates the voices of historically underrepresented populations [or identities],” with one-quarter or less agreeing, over half somewhat agreeing, and the remaining quarter disagreeing or somewhat disagreeing. These responses indicate that centering diverse populations in the classroom is happening in pockets, though not yet consistent across the district, and that there is some awareness at all staff levels.



The district has started working to ensure all district classrooms are culturally responsive. The [January 25, 2022, School Committee meeting](#) included a report from the superintendent titled “Diversifying Texts for Culturally Responsive Curriculum in HPS English Classrooms.” The report included the background and motivation for re-assessing curriculum: “*address our nation’s history of racism and teach students to understand and dismantle the structural racism that exists to this day*”; a description of shifts in units, texts, and course offerings; and a curriculum review process developed by the Secondary English Department, evaluating units by asking questions to determine if they are “*responsive, representative curriculum*.”

Though the district is laying a strong foundation for this work, school leaders expressed in focus groups that implementation has not yet consistently trickled down:

- “Our curriculum in general is not culturally diverse or relatively culturally aware... And I think that’s an area that our district knows that we’re figuring out and that they’re currently working on it.”
- “I think that’s an area where the district could use some help and some support... We’re really sort of on our own with that. I have my reading team and my library teacher doing research in terms of more culturally inclusive books and materials and better representing our student population in the materials that we’re using. But I think as a district, we could use some help with that.”

Educators report that the recent focus on multilingual learners has effectively given teachers strategies to support their ELs. One administrator commented, “So one thing that we’ve actually been pretty darn good at in the last year and a half is providing professional development for teachers around working with our English language learners and making content accessible to them.” Staff members’ comments reflected this district-wide focus:

- “One of our initiatives has been on the ELL population. So we have received a number of in-service trainings, looking at cultural stuff, but mostly looking at how you can integrate specific strategies into your classroom.”



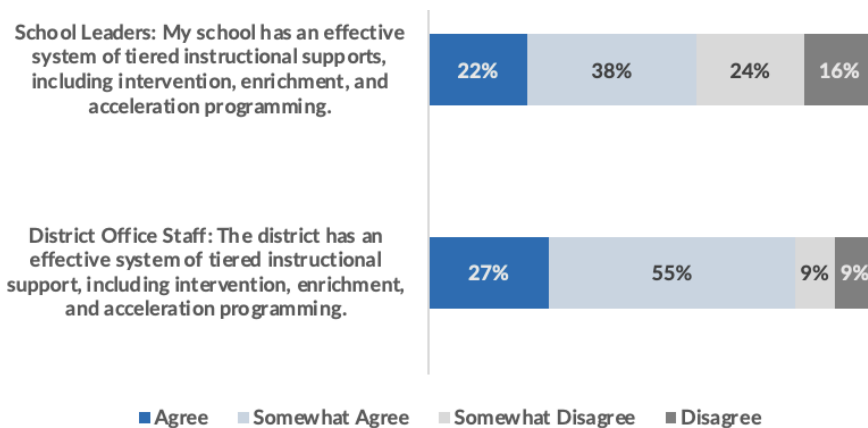
- “I think the PDs have gotten better. We've been having PDs focusing on the ELL students and different tools and theories of thought. So we are getting more educated in that population of students and how to interact with them.”
- “I think that admin does make it clear that teaching ELL students and differentiating is important, and it's part of your evaluation.”

The district has also worked to validate and sustain the cultures and languages of multilingual students in other ways. Middle and high school students report that the Heritage classes, Portuguese and Spanish language classes specifically for students who are native or fluent speakers, support their academic and identity development.

- “The Heritage class is great, I feel represented.”
- “Everyone has been able to speak their culture and use their original language.”
- “It represents my culture and identification—talking about culture and learning more about others.”

One staff member shared, “I do feel like it's a very welcoming district. And I feel like we're just kind of starting to have the discussions about some of these bigger topics, like anti-racism. Last year, we had training on implicit bias. We've had our district focus for the last has been around including multilingual learners and helping to integrate them into all activities and all aspects of the classroom. So I think that work is starting, but I definitely think there's a lot of work to be done still.”

**Structures are in place to support students academically, though intentional systems for struggling students are underdeveloped, especially at upper levels.**



District staff mostly agree that “The district has an effective system of tiered instructional support, including intervention, enrichment, and acceleration programming,” with over one-quarter (27.3%) agreeing, over half (54.6%) somewhat agreeing, and the remainder (18.2%) split between disagreeing and somewhat disagreeing. School leaders were less positive, responding to “My school has an effective system of tiered instructional supports, including intervention, enrichment, and acceleration programming” with 60% total agreement (including somewhat agree) and 40% disagreement (including somewhat disagree). Qualitative data also reflects varying experiences of staff and students, especially related to the school level.

Individualized support for elementary students in reading and mathematics is done through a Response to Intervention (RTI) model. Teachers and specialists collaborate to examine student data and create individual student learning objectives and strategies, which are implemented during dedicated RTI time during class. Overall, 75.3% of elementary teachers agreed or somewhat agreed that “My school has an effective system of tiered instructional supports, including intervention, enrichment, and acceleration programming.”

Extra support at the middle and high schools predominantly occurs after school or during a whole-school flexible period built into each school day, called Hawk Block at the middle school and ARC (Academics, Relationships, and

Community) at the high school. In focus groups and surveys, students spoke highly of this period as a valuable time to meet with teachers and get work done. Students shared:

- “During Hawk Block I go to my teachers if I’m struggling.”
- “Most of my teachers offer help, and if I’m still stuck on what I’m doing they’ll offer to sign up for ARC or after school.”

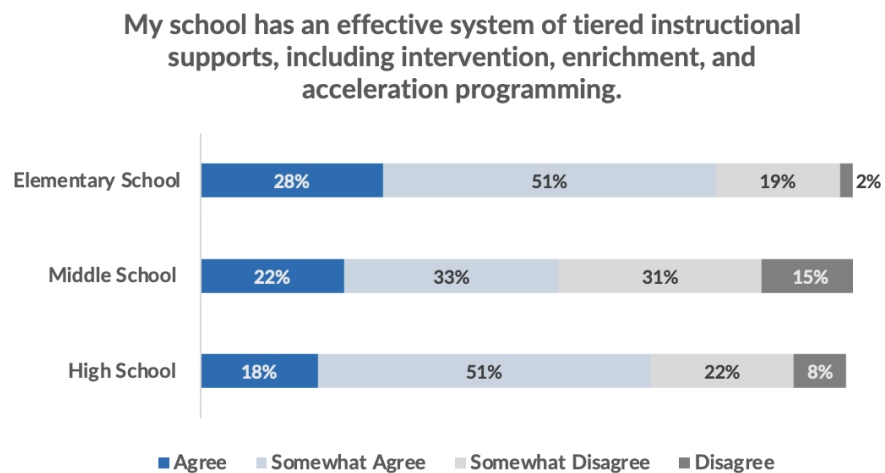
Staff reflected that these blocks are valuable but lack an intentional structure to target students who need support, depending entirely on the initiative of individual teachers and students. One administrator commented, “Intervention at Quinn is really... through Hawk Block for the most part, which is a great opportunity, but again, depends on whether the teachers are truly focused on... specific individual students and how are we going to raise their abilities... At the high school... it’s really up to the teachers whether they use ARC.”

Some stakeholders identified a gap in formalized, targeted academic support for students who don’t qualify for special education services but need intervention:

- “If parents haven’t requested testing but kids are struggling academically, we don’t have a system for intervention.” (Staff member)
- “MTSS isn’t really happening.” (Staff member)
- “Provide more RTI instruction and support for kids who do not meet the SPED criteria, but fall just below average.” (Family member)
- “I think that teachers should reach out to us more if they can tell we are struggling.” (Student)

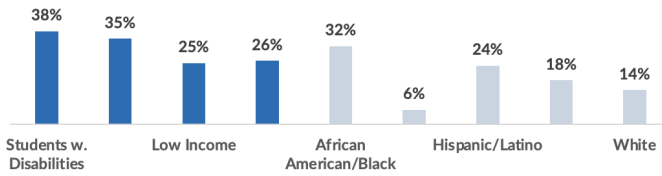
One district leader summed up student academic intervention and support as “Opportunity without intentionality. We have opportunities at schools, but there is not a strong intention around using them.”

At the middle school, just over half (54.5%) of school staff agree or somewhat agree that “My school has an effective system of tiered instructional supports, including intervention, enrichment, and acceleration programming.” At the high school, 69.4% of school staff agree or somewhat agree with this statement.

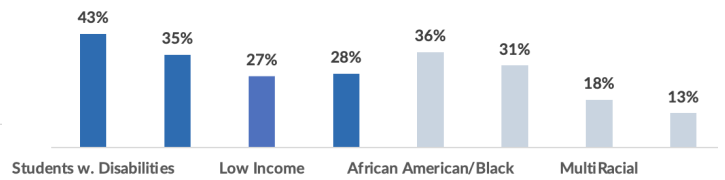


The gap in academic intervention affects any students who may need extra support at any point and is magnified for student populations who already experience marginalization. The graphs below show the percentages of students of various populations not meeting expectations on MCAS in grades 3-8 and 10.

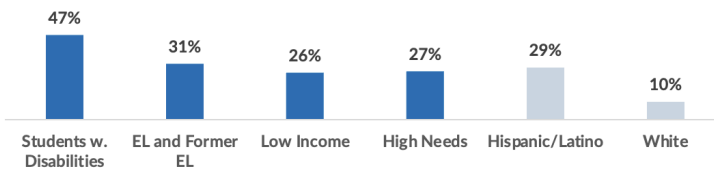
Percentage of Grade 3-8 of Students Not Meeting MCAS ELA Expectations



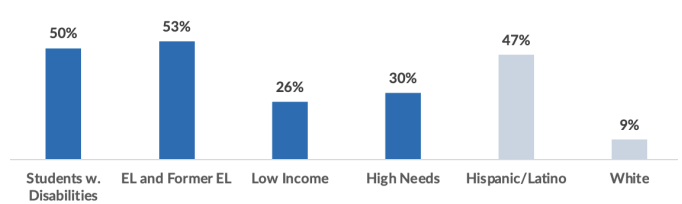
Percentage of Grade 3-8 Students Not Meeting MCAS Math Expectations



Percentage of Grade 10 Students Not Meeting MCAS ELA Expectations



Percentage of Grade 10 Students Not Meeting MCAS Math Expectations



Hudson Public Schools’ 2018-2021 District Improvement Plan included Strategic Priority 2.3, “Implement the District’s MTSS framework to support the academic success of all students.” The 2022-2025 District Improvement Plan consists of a more specific version of this goal: “Implement the District’s MTSS Framework to identify systems of support for students experiencing academic failure.” At the time of this report writing, the district has committed to but not yet fully implemented the 2022-2023 Action Step Priorities related to this goal, including:

- Evaluate and revise the IST process at each school.
- Evaluate strengths and areas for growth or gaps in each school’s current Tier 2 intervention opportunities (e.g., Hawk Block, RTI, and ARC).
- Establish core elements of effective Tier 1 instruction.

As stated previously, this report represents a snapshot of where the district was during data collection, the fall/winter of the 2022-2023 school year. The progressing goals in the District Improvement Plans and the detailed district MTSS framework represent awareness of best practices and the intention to continually improve academic support for students.

**The teacher evaluation structure does not consistently support productive, aligned developmental feedback.**

The educators of Hudson Public Schools are experiencing a shift in how evaluations are structured and conducted, and staff at most levels know that it is a work in progress. The current superintendent moved formal evaluation out of the domain of district-level curriculum directors and fully onto the shoulders of school leaders. One district administrator, while recognizing that the principals are “overwhelmed with the amount of people they actually have to evaluate,” added that “the curriculum directors actually can give feedback without being evaluative... they can actually give more honest feedback and can move people a little bit more than if they were actually the evaluators.” One high school teacher echoed this sentiment, saying, “[The curriculum directors] are not evaluators... so conversations with them, help that they offer, there’s a psychological safety in talking with all of them even though they are district leaders. They

are there to help us and nothing will be used against us.”

However, the benefits of releasing the curriculum directors from evaluatory responsibilities were overshadowed by the lack of depth in evaluations conducted by principals and assistant principals, who each have 30 or more teachers to evaluate every year. School leaders K-12 shared their feelings of overwhelm and doubt:

- “I don’t think the current teacher evaluation system totally improves practice... We have so many to evaluate that it’s really hard to even give them the professional development or the space and the time and the supports that they need to improve.”
- “It’s really hard to evaluate 32 teachers and really have... great conversations about what teaching and learning looks like.”
- “The eval system here needs an overhaul. It does not effectively support the improvement of teaching and learning.”

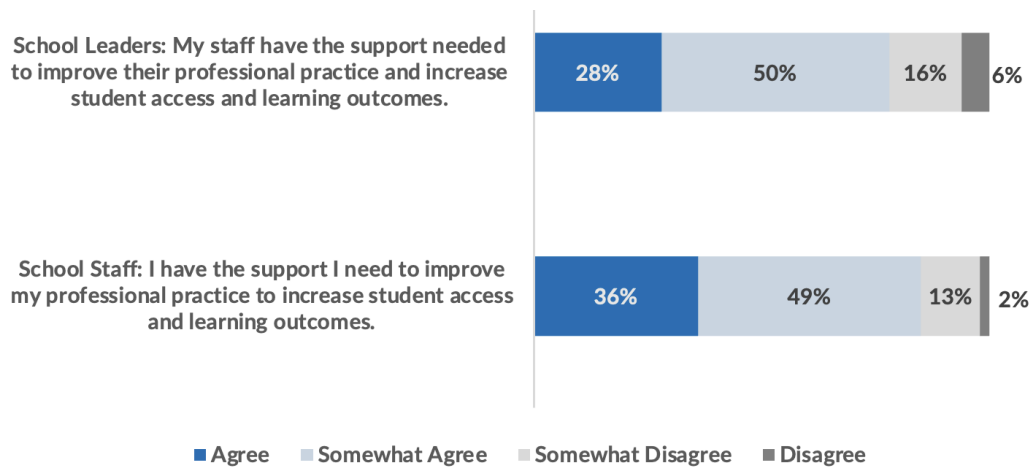
Teachers similarly expressed frustration with an evaluation process they feel is too surface-level:

- “It’s not valid. Someone comes in for 30 minutes to evaluate you as a teacher—they don’t look at your teaching, but rather your room.”
- “I think admin knows the observation process is completely perfunctory... I think people are hungry for something where we can actually talk and get feedback from another professional... Too few hands on deck makes the feedback not helpful.”
- “The administrators that observe me spend minimal time in my room and to the minimum amount of observation. The feedback often feels like platitudes that don’t help me improve my practice.”

Both teachers and evaluators lament the subject-specific pedagogical knowledge often lacking when curriculum coaches are removed from the process. School leaders recognize that they cannot provide feedback on content-specific strategies, especially at upper levels. One leader acknowledged, “I think our teachers benefited when curriculum directors were involved in that process as well.” Teachers shared similar sentiments, one commenting, “the feedback you get is more general because they don’t know what they’re looking for.” Another teacher added, “It’s more helpful when it’s more specific to what you teach rather than an admin that comes in once a year to observe.” English Language Development teachers, in particular, agreed that the lack of content background reduces the quality of the feedback:

- “It’s been complicated because administrators don’t necessarily have that ELD background and then they’re evaluating you on it, which is tricky.”
- “As an ELD teacher, the evaluation doesn’t have a sense of what to look for... It’s not as valuable to have a principal review the class without being there or knowing.”
- “Sometimes my evaluation becomes more of an education, educating the evaluator on ELL strategies. It’s good to educate them but that’s not the goal.”

Despite these trends, it should be noted that individual teachers reported positive, productive relationships with their evaluators, sharing stories of evaluators sitting down with teachers ahead of time to confer about goals and align expectations. One teacher remarked, “I feel like my evaluator is there for me.” Qualitative survey data reflected these mixed feelings about the effectiveness of evaluations, with about half of the school leaders and staff members in the “Somewhat agree” category when asked if staff have the support needed to improve their professional practice.



The district recently invested in professional development for evaluators with Dr. Kim Marshall. In focus groups, principals and assistant principals mentioned appreciating the monthly sessions of RocketPD, or “Rethinking Teacher Supervision, Coaching, and Evaluation,” particularly a district-wide shift towards shorter, more frequent drop-in observations with immediate informal feedback. As one administrator summarized, “Evaluators can pop into rooms... you're in there 10 times a year, which doesn't sound like a lot, but it's way more than what we're doing right now... And one of the key pieces of what he suggests we do is we give feedback right after that... You just give them feedback, you have a conversation with them... I think they're going to get a much better picture of who that person is as an instructor, and really be able to give quality feedback.”

Teachers reported feeling this shift favorably:

- “Quick drop in observations are a positive shift from the old system of one hour-long observation.”
- “Principal leaves notes with positive feedback notes which are helpful.”

Formal teacher evaluations at HPS use the [rubrics](#) published by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in 2018, which has four standards for effective practice:

- I. Curriculum, Planning, and Assessment
- II. Teaching All Students
- III. Family and Community Engagement
- IV. Professional Culture

Each standard contains three to six specific indicators. The Teacher self-assessment is a rubric on each of the sixteen indicators, and the HPS Walkthrough Form, used by observers to document notes and feedback, is focused on Standards I and II. Another piece of the process is an “Educator Collection of Evidence” form, in which teachers upload and document evidence pertaining to their mastery of any of the sixteen indicators, plus two additional options: “Progress toward attaining professional practice goal(s)” and “Progress toward attaining student learning goal(s).” It’s unclear the extent to which the new drop-in observation notes are aligned with DESE standards, teacher-specific goals, building instructional goals, or general informal feedback.

Teachers noted that the evaluation process is driven by the standards and rubrics created by DESE, which is the same for all teachers across the state, but that it is open to interpretation in alignment with district equity priorities. One teacher said, “There’s no evaluation procedure around with an equity lens in particular.” Another mentioned that the district or school’s instructional focus is not embedded into evaluation and that the content focus often gets missed because the evaluators are not content directors, adding that there is “a lot of box checking on the goals... You need to say your goal matches [district or school priorities] but not often do you get called on it.”

Instructional leaders are aware of a missing piece of alignment along the teacher evaluation and development process:

- “There is a lack of alignment among leaders about what the core instructional strategy. And then a lack of a strong culture within schools around implementation of those core instructional strategies.”
- “I do think our district improvement plans and our school improvement plans align well, but... the teacher evaluation system doesn’t really align with those documents.”

Another leader summarized the goals of alignment, recognizing the substantial progress and room for growth: “The goal is for that to be a streamlined process where again, the district has articulated commonly understood mission, vision, values. Those inform the district improvement plan, which informs the school-level plans, which can inform practitioner plans. I think we're not 100% there yet. But I think the district has been trying to refine those goals so that teachers can see themselves more directly in those goals and in that plan than they may have previously.” This quote demonstrates the solid foundation and practice of alignment that the district has developed but isn’t yet fully realized in how educators are supported to implement district, school, and individual goals at the classroom level.

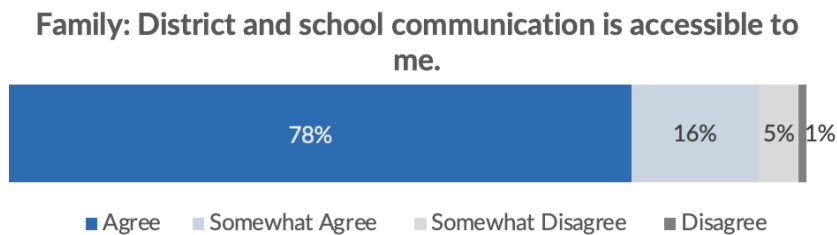
## DOMAIN 5: FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**District communication structures are developing and seek to include and amplify the voices of the community while informing families of district direction.**

***Families can access timely, multilingual communication at the district and school levels.***

Hudson Public Schools prioritizes the engagement of its families and has invested in diversifying communication methods to connect with community members. As outlined in the district's 2022-2025 Improvement Plan, communication and engagement intend to build community among all stakeholders and strengthen stakeholder engagement with equitable access to district information. The equity auditing process analyzed the district's communication structures and available opportunities to families to understand the extent to which they are inclusive and accessible and leverage families as partners in their child(ren)'s learning experience and reviewed the communication structures at different levels.

As the first source of externally facing information, the district website is accessible for visually-able individuals and families and includes announcements, district news, events, closures, and the district calendar. District values are prominently displayed on the home page, along with the district vision. Website content is maintained and updated regularly to reflect district changes. Families can find materials regarding registration, academic testing, grade reporting, transitional services, and community-specific resources, among other things.



The information and pages relating to family or parent resources are accessible in Chinese, French, German, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. Survey data suggests that 94% of families feel communication is accessible, which highlights the district's work to create more accessible communication.

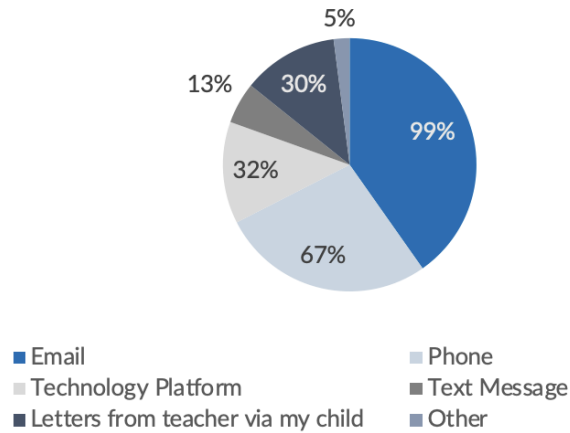
To ensure its linguistically diverse community receives the intended messaging, the district translation services translate all central office-based communications primarily into Portuguese and Spanish. Interpretation support is also available at school events, such as parent nights, IEP meetings, new student orientation, and school committee meetings. Families shared that communication efforts have greatly improved in the last few years and named educator-level communication as crucial in understanding their child's academic and social needs. Teachers, administrators, and other non-instructional staff use two-way translation platforms such as Talking Points, and Language Line is in place to support mass messaging via phone and email. Although not regarded as the most effective in creating culturally engaging spaces, these platforms are helping bridge the gap between staff and non-English speaking families. There is a shared responsibility regarding communication as one member reported during phone calls:

- [“District creates opportunities for bilingual families to communicate with the school, district and educators by providing translation support.”](#)

- “What they're doing now with the electronic messages, with all the different languages, that's good. For my family it didn't matter, but for other families it's helpful.”

At the district level, communication is disseminated through Aspen, website updates, parent liaisons, email, newsletters, and social media announcements. In addition, there is an acknowledgment of the various modalities needed to connect with families and communicate messages of importance.

**Family: How does the school communicate with you?**



Families shared:

- “We get weekly emails from each school, teachers reach out (not so much at HS level), good amount of info on a regular basis.”
- “They reach out and communicate to families and provide what's going on. Not on Facebook, but [I] still feel connected.”
- “Keeping me posted about everything they do in school, any questions that I have, they answer with good answers. Great schools.”
- “The school keeps me informed, and I know what's happening- text, email. I'm never in a position where I don't know what's going on. There's a lot of help from the teachers and the school.”

Though stakeholders agree that district communication structures are functional, they are not yet consistent across schools. Families in Hudson shared that efforts by the district to develop and sustain relationships with parents are evident yet being implemented differently by each school. The experience of families varied significantly, and while 78.5% agree that the communication from the district is accessible to them, there remain concerns over the consistency of messaging from schools. Communication structures were regarded as clear and critical to a child’s development in elementary and middle school, while upper-grade interactions pertain more to student performance. Additionally, families with multiple students at different school levels described the process of gathering and understanding communication as complex and hard to navigate. For example, school website links, while including a functioning landing page, do not provide a consistent information structure for easy family access.

While not included in outward-facing communication, the district has a strong structure through the coordination of family enrollment services. The welcome center liaison coordinates enrollments for new families and communication between families, district staff, and family liaisons as needed; they manage and maintain Welcome Center resources and screening for language skills for the English Learner Education Program.

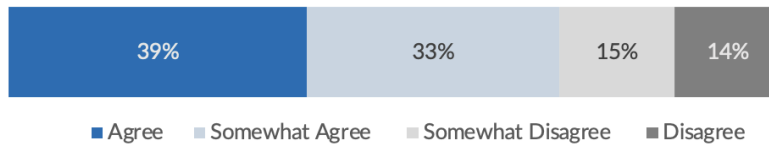


*Stakeholders have varied perceptions of the district's inclusivity of identities and backgrounds in existing communication processes and procedures.*

Although the district has and continues to make strides to improve its communication avenues, some elements do not fully reflect its mission of inclusivity. For example, surveyed and interviewed stakeholders share that in-person communication and protocols do not yet create a welcoming environment for all families and learners. In particular, stakeholders named that the communication language the schools and district currently use doesn't adequately recognize the community's varied family structure, family makeup, and non-binary gender identification. Families noted:

- “Stay current in vocabulary relating to identities.”
- “Hudson is a community [with] a lot of Brazilian and Portuguese, but it would be nice to have more Hispanic representation. More focus on Spanish-speaking students and their families. I would like to see how they expand to a Spanish-speaking community. More activities that involve the Spanish-speaking community.”

**Family: There are opportunities for me to connect with like family members/guardians**

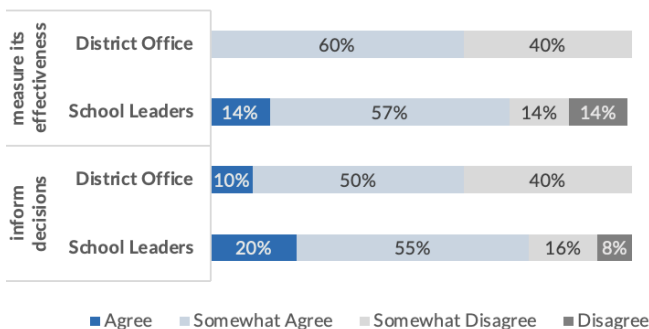


*While family participation and inclusion are a district priority, there are additional opportunities to engage families in decision-making, feedback, and implementation.*

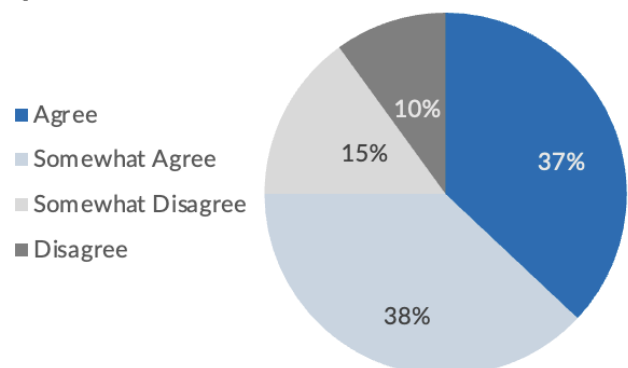
Understanding families' desired communication—frequency, method, and purpose—is critical to creating an approach that meets district and family needs. The district has recently hired and filled the position of a Portuguese-speaking liaison to improve the district's communication and engagement efforts. Families who were interviewed and surveyed expressed satisfaction with the level of engagement by both educators and administrators at the school level:

- “His teacher sent home a questionnaire about what happens at home, strengths, weaknesses, etc. which I think was a great idea! They send emails available in three languages and offer a dual-language program beginning in Kindergarten.”
- “Communication -The teachers go above and beyond.”
- “The teacher calls me regularly and sends emails asking for feedback and asking me if I have questions.”
- “I come up every now and then to go to public discussions and ask questions. Or call by phone.”
- “The principal and teachers are more than receptive. Getting their work done, if grades start falling, parents check in and see what to do to reverse it they let her know and send letters and stuff.”

**The district asks for and uses staff, families, and community input and feedback to...**

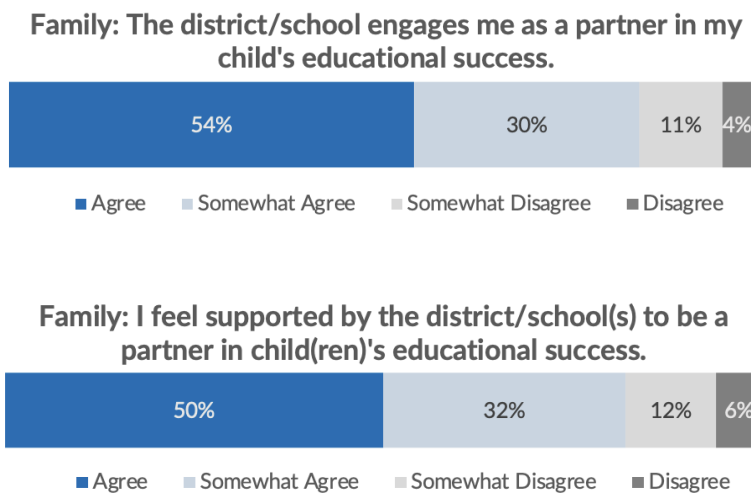


**Family: The district asks for and uses family input and feedback to inform decisions.**



While the district has worked to best integrate the feedback and input from families and community members through listening tours, the low attendance at these events displays the opposite results of the district’s intended inclusion outcomes. Families shared that while they can share their feedback with school administrators and teachers, they do not currently feel that the district fully incorporates it into its decision-making process. The most prominent need, as reflected in survey responses and focus groups, is to engage and implement the feedback gathered by families as partners in their child(ren)’s learning experience and in the district's work: “If you are wanting input from families, listen to them. Then actually try to understand what families really want. I feel that the school is always doing surveys, but nothing really comes of it. Or they are asking the wrong questions. Most of the time the decision is already been made or they have their own agendas.”

While the district has held listening tours, the level of engagement and ongoing opportunities for families to provide and see that feedback is limited. There is a desire for the district to engage and leverage its community partners to gather family input, share external perspectives and voices of all families in the district's decisions, and collaboratively approach filling gaps that the district and schools alone cannot provide to students and families. The survey responses from families below illustrate the extent to which many families feel engaged and supported to be a partner in their child’s education.



**The district currently provides access and support to the highest-needs families through school-based and individual support.**

Hudson has several instrumental and long-standing partners supporting the district in various ways, such as the Hudson Food Pantry, CHAPS, Boys & Girls Clubs, Kailey Kare Kits, local churches, Hudson Health Department, Hudson Cultural Council, and Public Library, among others. These partnerships are widely recognized and understood by administrative school staff as critical to supporting students and their families. It is unclear the extent to which these strategic partnerships support district initiatives and student and family needs.

Points of contact in the community for all families include:

- Medical services in the region
- Behavioral services connections
- Liaison center
- Connection with all district schools to coordinate and communicate

Internal resources available to families include:

- Spanish Liaison coordinates all language, translation, and interpretation services for the district, coordinates Padres Comprometidos, events for families who speak a language other than English and serves as an interpreter for Spanish-speaking families.
- Portuguese Liaison serves as an interpreter for Portuguese-speaking families in the district.
- Welcome center liaison coordinates new enrollments for new families and communicates, manages, and maintains Welcome Center resources. In addition, they support the screening for Language Skills for the English Language Learning Department and serve as an interpreter for Spanish and Portuguese families as needed.

## DOMAIN 6: SCHOOL INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

**Hudson provides various professional development training and opportunities for all faculty and staff. Staff expresses a need and desire for ongoing and sustained professional development aligned with individual and school priorities.**

The [HPS website](#) states, “Hudson Public Schools agrees with the philosophy put forth by Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) on high quality professional development. High quality professional development is a set of coherent learning experiences that is systematic, purposeful, and structured over a sustained period of time with the goal of improving educator practice and student outcomes. It enables educators to facilitate the learning of students by acquiring and applying knowledge, skills, and abilities that address student needs and improvement goals of the district, school, and individual.”

HPS's professional development mission is to “elevate student learning by advancing teachers' abilities to meet student needs and open student horizons,” the vision is for “Hudson Public School staff work to continuously improve their instruction by learning alongside and from one another about student-centered practices,” and their values state “Professional Development in the Hudson Public Schools includes all stakeholders building a mindset for continuous improvement.” The distinct mission statement describes the district's purpose and role in achieving the vision. The district outlines four strategic objectives for achieving its vision in its current professional development plan:

- *All staff work in a collaborative environment to meet our students' needs and believe that all students can learn. Our professional development is student-centered; working from an instructional framework where all endeavors point towards the same goal; with different lenses and strategic choices, with a specific, continuous focus.*
- *We work from a data-driven standpoint that studies a variety of student work (outputs) and continuously adjust teaching practices supported by researched-based pedagogy.*
- *Authentic activities include professional rounds, collaboration across grade levels and disciplines, and home-grown talent-developing quality professional development opportunities that provide strategic choices for all.*
- *Our professional development opportunities build leaders with unbounded capacity that enhance student performance.*

In addition to district-provided opportunities, the district offers ways for staff and leaders to attend professional learning out of the district:

- **Request to attend conferences:** allows staff and leaders to request to attend conferences related to their field of work. This can allow them to network with other professionals, learn about new research and best practices, and stay up-to-date with the latest developments in their field.
- **Employee reimbursement for travel/conferences:** reimbursement associated with faculty, staff, and leaders' travel and conference expenses, making it more affordable for them to attend professional development opportunities.
- **Course approval and reimbursement:** facilitate opportunities for staff and leaders to take courses related to their field of work that align with school priorities, including programs, higher education, and certifications.

One district leader explained the value of leveraging these structures to support staff in furthering their education: “We try to encourage... if we can build a para into a teacher. That would be the goal. We want to promote them internally... it's amazing to try and build some of our support staff that maybe didn't think they could be teachers.” School leaders reported being aware of and appreciating these opportunities both for themselves and their school staff, commenting:

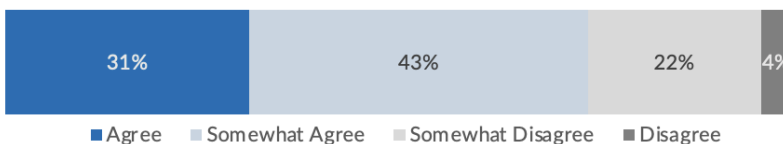
- “I do feel very fortunate that this district does support folks doing PD whether it be within the district or outside. I know personally, I feel very supported.”

- “Hudson [is]... definitely super open and willing to pay and send teachers to anything they want to attend. I haven’t done anything as an admin but I know that if I reached out that there would be zero pushback.”

Principals and assistant principals are further supported by local administrators groups, such as the Massachusetts School Administrators Association, and by training provided by the district, such as with Focused Schools and other organizations the district has partnered with in recent years. In focus groups and surveys, school leaders were mixed on whether they felt that their professional learning opportunities were sufficient:

- “I’m part of a larger regional principals group. [District administrators] support my membership to the Mass. School Administrators Association. I think in terms of PD, that organization is where I do get most of my learning right now.”
- “Two years ago, we did a little bit [of]observation/evaluation. But by and large we don’t get a lot of PD.”
- “The opportunities we get in the summer and our ELEVATE program is excellent. We go through the same professional development as teachers.”
- “We would have regular meetings about leadership and instructional feedback to teachers about the challenges and the strategies to bring to PLCS and that kind of work....And those were pretty valuable experiences.”

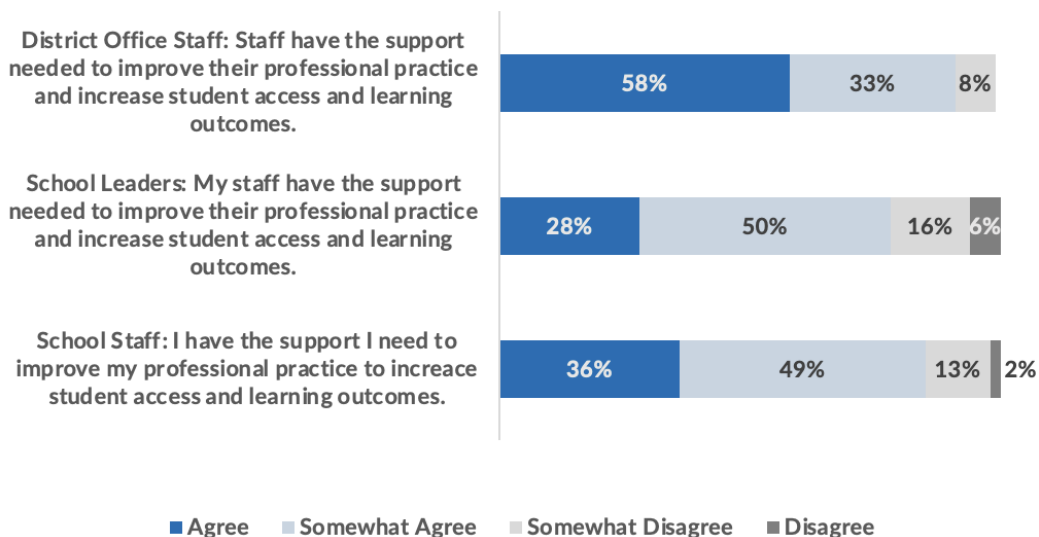
**School Leaders: I receive sufficient professional learning opportunities that are aligned with my school priorities.**



One school leader both appreciated the district’s openness to outside professional development and wondered about possible guidelines for selecting opportunities: “Having had experience in several other districts, there’s not a super clear pathway to access professional development, nor is there clarity around what’s available... and then in addition to that, we don’t collectively as an admin team have a shared vision of what PD we want to work on together.”

School leaders support their staff to improve their professional practice, both through district-provided professional development and through formal and informal feedback systems. The professional learning focuses each year is chosen by the district, with school leaders either participating along with the rest of the staff or, in many cases, leading the sessions themselves.

- “We had a PD schedule that was put out through our Central Office and... the expectation is that administrators are participating in the teachers’ PD as well.”
- “We were expected to lead all the PD in the district... [district administrators] want us to lead everything versus participating, I guess we’re participating by leading.”



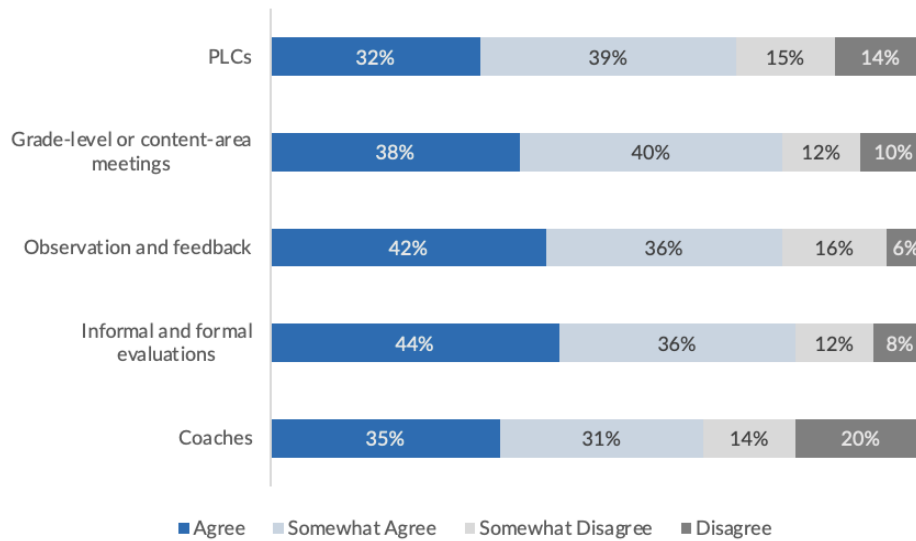
When asked if staff have the support needed to improve their professional practice and increase student access and learning outcomes, district staff agreed at substantially higher levels than either school leaders or school staff themselves, suggesting that building leaders may be more aware of and responsive to the needs of their educators at the school level.

Though the teacher evaluation system, discussed more in Domain 4, is currently being re-examined, school leaders have the flexibility in their buildings to develop feedback systems that support their staff. School leaders reported:

- “One of my personal goals this year is to get to three classes a day... I’m doing shorter visits with maybe a post-it note... always keeping the classroom a focus, knowing what’s going on in classrooms and giving teachers opportunities to experiment.”
- “One of the things our ILT is looking at right now is having a Peer Observation Program in place... We’ll have some kind of system where teachers are seeing each other and meeting with each other about what they’re observing.”
- “With our new teacher program, we encourage and provide opportunities for those new teachers to go out and watch other teachers teach.”
- “We do regular walkthroughs and debrief conversations... We do have two coaches available at the building level, one is like a broad spectrum instructional coach and the other one focuses mainly on language acquisition. And then in addition to that, they have common planning time where they’re looking through the implementation of their curriculum as well as what’s happening for kids.”

When school staff were asked in the survey how they are supported in improving their instructional practices, “Observation & feedback” and “Informal and formal evaluations” were rated the most highly, a credit to the efforts of building leaders.

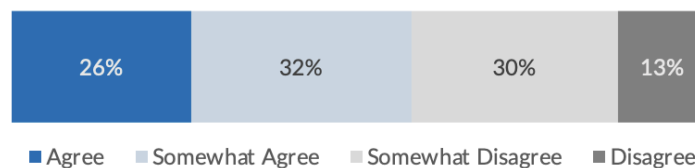
### School Staff: I am supported in improving my instructional practices through...



School leaders themselves, however, are feeling a gap in support for their own professional development. One school leader explained, “In terms of formal evaluation, it has been fairly non-existent since I’ve arrived. I will say that the superintendent has been very supportive of me....I think we’re at a place where I’m hoping that if he needed to give me hard feedback he would....But I wouldn’t say that I...really get substantial, performance-changing feedback.”

Some leaders who have been in the district for several years discussed a previous outside mentoring partnership that contributed to their success in their roles as building administrators. One leader commented, “Administrators should get mentors. I think recently it’s been more the superintendent serving in that role. But when you think about it, though he may have good intentions, you really can’t be the boss and be the mentor.”

### School leaders: The school leader evaluation process supports leaders’ opportunities to improve their professional practice.



Overall, these professional development opportunities provided by HPS allow staff to stay current in their field and improve their skills, and provide the necessary structure and flexibility for school leaders to support staff, who in turn are able to better serve the students. As one school leader summarized, “We are all lifelong learners and we can’t just work in a school and promote that to kids without modeling it ourselves....I think our teachers look to us as instructional leaders but also understand we don’t have all the answers.”

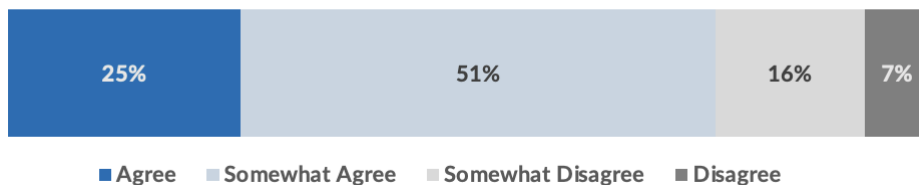
**School staff report limited opportunities to collaboratively monitor student data and a lack of sufficient student data.**

A shared sense of accountability is crucial to ensuring the success of all students, and disaggregated data most acutely delineates individual student success and the overall success of marginalized student populations. School and district leaders recognize a gap in how they and school staff hold themselves and others accountable for implementing equity-informed practices and behaviors. Leaders and staff shared:

- “We can see the data, it's not a question of awareness. It's a question of response.”
- “We're all watching attendance data very closely in all the buildings to monitor and address chronic absenteeism.”
- “It's definitely a weakness.”
- “We're collecting data and we're building language every day, but there isn't really a district protocol for keeping that data or not, not keeping that data but you know, organizing and using that data in an effective way.”

Survey results indicate that staff members have mixed feelings about their access to data and opportunities for collaboration. One-quarter (25%) of staff members agree that they have access to the data they need to inform their decisions and actions, while 51% somewhat agree, 16% somewhat disagree, and 7% disagree. This suggests that a majority of staff members do not feel they have complete access to the data they need to make informed decisions.

**Staff: I have access to the qualitative and quantitative data I need to inform my decisions and actions.**



Staff members also have mixed feelings about opportunities for collaboration. Just over half of staff members agree or somewhat agree that they have opportunities to collaborate with colleagues to monitor student data. This suggests that while some staff members feel they have opportunities for collaboration, a significant number do not feel the same way.

**Staff: Our school staff have the opportunity to regularly collaborate with colleagues to monitor disaggregated student data to identify students' academic, social-emotional, identity, and behavior needs and successful outcomes.**



The results indicate the potential need for improvement in access to data and opportunities for collaboration among staff members.



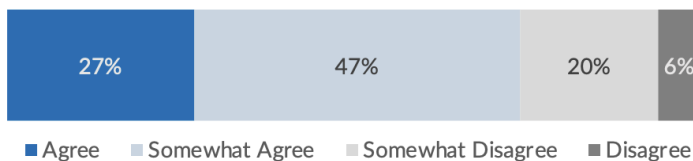
## School budgets are aligned with SIP priorities and the needs of marginalized student populations.

School leaders collaborate with the district, school council, and staff to create School Improvement Plans, or SIPs, aligned with the District Improvement Plan. In focus groups, school leaders shared an understanding of the clear alignment between district priorities, school priorities, and school-level action items.

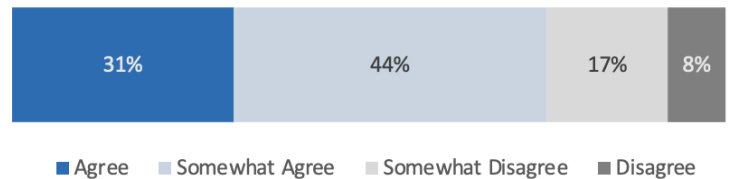
- “We do a good job of vertical alignment with district goals [and] school goals. We have our district improvement plan every year; it gets reviewed and revised by what we call our ELEVATE Team, which includes all the administrators from across all the buildings, and those trickle down to our school improvement plan.”
- “We have four goals every year as part of the school improvement plan created by principals and the school council. And then that work trickles out to what we do as a staff.”

The majority of school leaders surveyed (73%) somewhat agree or agree that their school budget priorities reflect the needs of marginalized student populations, and a similar majority (75%) either somewhat agree or agree that the school's budget is aligned with SIP priorities.

### School Leaders: My school budget priorities reflect the needs of marginalized student populations.



### School Leaders: My school's budget is aligned with SIP priorities to ensure the access and success of all students.



Some school leaders expressed a desire for more transparency in how final budget decisions are made in terms of resource allocation to schools. One leader reported, “There's sort of a semi-democratic process that exists to at least have a dialogue about one another's proposals, but when it comes down to the hard conversations, we don't really have them. And those decisions are being made for us ultimately, in the end. So I think some people wish there was more transparency about what real calculus is about.” Others recognized the difficult decisions that must be made by a district with limited resources and many students needs to consider:

- “We do supply higher ups with a lot of evidence but no money to go to those things, so I don't think our town's budget can support the needs of our schools.”
- “I don't think that our budget is being misused or anything like that. I think that we have some needs that aren't that just can't be met due to the amount of money that we have.”

One school leader also described challenges in trying to hire paraprofessionals for a language-based learning center and a social emotional academic program, saying, “Because of the insurance rates, we have lost out on very highly qualified candidates... So there is a huge disparity in getting candidates to meet the needs and the willingness to be able to work with the students here, because of that financial piece. It is a barrier.”

Yet school leaders shared positive examples of being able to use resources within their buildings to better meet student needs.

- “We've been able to take some FTEs within departments and create a better curriculum for newcomers... And in this budget cycle, we really got to look long and hard at what dropout prevention looks like and what it would mean to have either an alternative program of some sort or some sort of space in the building for kids who are really struggling to navigate the day to day.”

- “I partnered with the ESL teacher to get a fourth ESL teacher... What that allowed us to do with that extra person was one, create some flexibility in the master schedule... we can feel better about where kids are ultimately being scheduled. And it also allows us to build in some language acquisition coaching throughout the building, which is the primary need our staff has.”

On the whole, school leaders at Hudson Public Schools are supported to align their school’s resources with school priorities and the needs of marginalized student populations.

## DOMAIN 7: TALENT DEVELOPMENT

**Human resources structures have a foundational approach to recruiting, hiring, developing, and retaining a diverse workforce, yet there remain structural gaps impeding progress.**

As a district, Hudson has navigated the uncertainty caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the national educator shortage. The district has acknowledged the struggle with adequate hiring and placing educators in front of students. In particular, the district has surfaced the need to attract and retain support staff. With these recent considerations in mind, the Mass Insight team analyzed the existing recruitment, hiring, development, and retention structures to understand the extent to which the district's talent development strategy focuses on bringing in new and diverse staff, as well as ensuring ongoing professional learning and development opportunities for all staff to create an inclusive work and learning environment that reflects district values, priorities, and needs. Since returning to back to a traditional school day, Hudson has been strategically reviewing its internal hiring and recruitment practices, while assessing the effectiveness of outside vendors who support the staffing of paraprofessionals and other support staff.

Evidence gathered through focus groups, interviews, surveys, and district data suggest that existing district structures, processes, and focus areas, as outlined in the FY23 budget and in district and school leaders discussions are to design systems that strengthen the recruitment, hiring, and development of a diverse and qualified workforce. Although the district has, in recent years, made efforts to understand the impact of its workforce on student progress and success, there are gaps between desired outcomes and results. Internally, staff shared a desire for coherence and strategically aligned plans that support the district's desire to have a more culturally diverse and qualified workforce. As one school leader shared, [“I think we do need to be more creative and the district's moving in this direction, but I think we need to be more creative with our recruiting practices, and figuring out ways that we can make Hudson the desirable location for folks to come and work.”](#)

Currently, the district's approach to attracting domestic talent relies on regional, local, and web-based recruitment fairs and other opportunities that highlight the benefits of Hudson as a community and culturally diverse district. While anecdotes were shared during interviews and focus groups, information was not available for review in the district website, shared materials, or publically available resources. As shared in other sections of this report, one of Hudson's strengths is its deep-rooted community values and leadership, resulting in former students joining the district as teachers or staff, as well as educators growing into school and leadership positions. While a positive attribute of the district's presence in the Hudson community, there is no data available to measure the correlation between local hiring and adequate staffing for instructional and non-instructional positions.

The district uses SchoolSpring as the primary job posting platform, which allows the district to search for candidates from the site's national pool, distribute openings to Indeed, Monster, Teach.org, via Twitter, and automatic email alerts sent to interested job seekers. Candidates, regional and national, can view and apply for all open positions in the district through SchoolSpring. SchoolSpring, although functional, is limited to certifications, resumes, and cover letters. There was insufficient evidence to understand the extent to which Hudson utilized SchoolSpring, or plan to fully integrate the platform with an alternative applicant tracking system, such as TalentEd. The site does not have the features to structure postings and applicant tracking to capture demographic data and support a question-layering process that allows the district to capture accurate certification/licensing data. At the school level, principals and school leaders have historically identified candidates for open positions and have managed the recruitment process for candidates. At the moment, there isn't a district-wide process that supports school leadership with conducting inclusive, unbiased, and structured selection procedures, although there is an understanding at the district level that such supports are required.

As a linguistically diverse district, Hudson has invested time and resources to widen its internal reach to attract and hire talent from Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries. In recent years, the district has successfully hired staff from Spain, Brazil, and Portugal. The process, as identified through interviews and focus groups, is not centralized or spearheaded directly by the HR department but rather from personal relationships and outreach from district staff, such as the World Languages Curriculum Director. Recruitment for international staff is done on professional and networking platforms such as LinkedIn. The process which international candidates have to go through significantly varies from that of domestic and MA state applicants due to the sponsorship of visas and national policies. The district is looking to define its process for identifying qualified international candidates and the support structures to ensure their orientation into the district and Hudson community.

In addition, the district is working to revamp its benefits package to officer prospective candidates and staff affordable and accessible insurance options, which are currently a point of contention. One staff member shared that “if you’re a secretary almost [\$]750 [of your] paycheck [goes] toward insurance.” Staff across the district shared a similar sentiment, as quoted below.

- School leader: “...because of the insurance rates, we have lost out on very highly qualified candidates.”
- School leader: “...there is a huge disparity in getting candidates to meet the needs and the willingness to be able to work with the students here. Because of that financial piece and it is a barrier. And it's a barrier for me as well.”
- School leader: “When paraprofessionals leave it has a lot to do with health insurance money or health insurance is extremely high.”
- School staff: “The big turn over is in the first three years and the cost of insurance is the biggest turn off.”

### ***Candidate tracking***

There is not yet a candidate tracking system that enables Hudson to effectively track, plan or evaluate the effectiveness of recruitment and hiring efforts. Data and artifacts reviewed by the team do not show evidence of a working candidate tracking system. Evaluated data did not track the candidate process through the recruitment or selection pipeline, lacked a tracking mechanism for existing hires, and is limited in ability to disaggregate data s. A review of the district’s application platform indicated HR has worked to create consistency in language for all postings and embedded a non-discriminatory statement to amplify its commitment to equity.

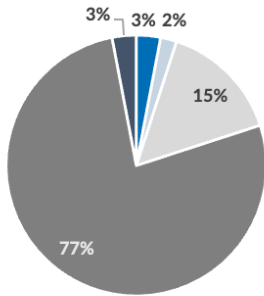
While there is consistency in the posting language for all roles, there remain inconsistencies in the required skills, duties, competencies, and salary. Although a significant percentage of staff believe that the district is attracting and retaining diverse candidates, staff shared that recruitment and hiring efforts don’t focus on revising internal practices, such as effectively supporting leaders’ interviewing and selection process, as discussed in the previous section. Examination of district-provided data reveals that the current candidate tracking system does not accurately support the organization of disaggregated data by candidates. As a result, the district has limited access to in-depth candidate data to assess a candidate’s profile and enable the district to accurately report on and plan for vacancies by subgroups.

### ***Staff and student racial representation***

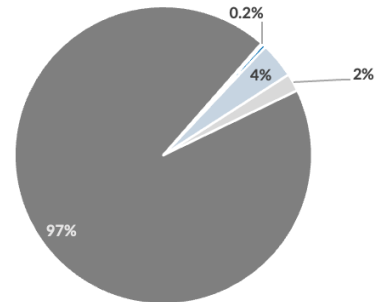
While the diversification of the student population and teaching staff have been prioritized to support student needs, particularly linguistic needs, the diversity among the teaching staff is not yet representative of the student population. Currently, the Hudson student population is 77% white with a representative white teacher population of 97%. In contrast, Hispanic/Latino students account for 15% of the student population, while Hispanic/Latino teachers account for 2% of teachers. The below data show the district’s full-time staff by race in the 2022 school year, among the district’s FTE teacher-level positions. Similar to the student population data gathered from both the state and the

district, there is no evidence of ethnic data to account for students and staff who are from a majority of Latin American countries who identify as racially White.

2022 Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



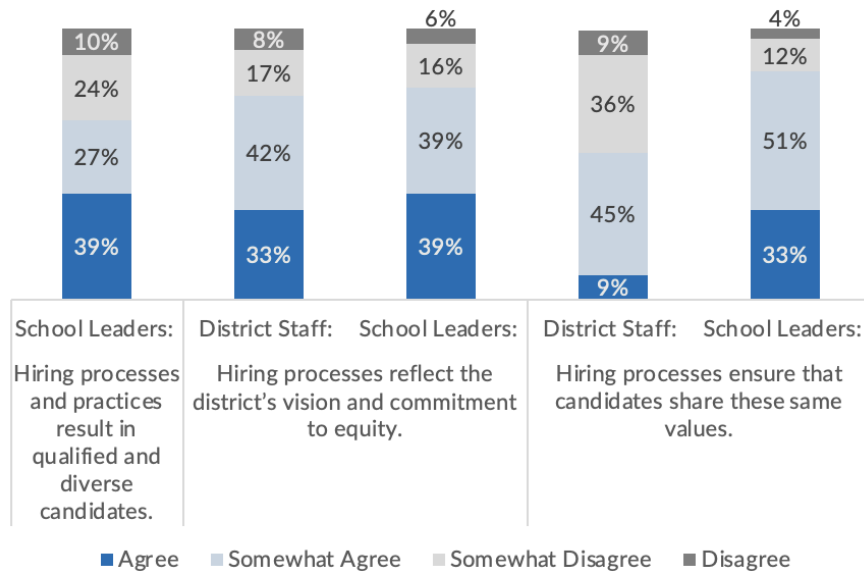
2022 FTE Teachers by Race/Ethnicity



■ Black/African American ■ Asian ■ Hispanic/Latino ■ White ■ MultiRacial

■ Black/African American ■ Asian ■ Hispanic/Latino ■ White ■ MultiRacial

Survey responses below from district staff and school leaders indicate that the majority of leaders feel that current hiring processes not only result in qualified and diverse candidates, but also that current hiring processes reflect the district’s vision and commitment. A greater number of school leaders than district leaders believe that hiring processes result in candidates that share district values, yet over a majority from both groups agreed or strongly agreed.



While leaders are positive about the hiring processes and practices, students and staff still recognize the need to increase the number of diverse staff, particularly teachers. Students indicated their desire for the district to hire more diverse teachers.

- “For sexuality and gender diversity, a lot of people have the pride stickers on their windows so you know it’s a safe space. But it doesn’t always correlate exactly.”
- “No mix of race of the teachers aside from the language teachers. There’s only one Black teacher in the school. Him being the only one in the classroom, it puts a lot on Black students.”

District and school staff also expounded on the need to hire more diverse and representative staff:

- “We have been looking into posting. We've done some research on some diversity and inclusion sites... We brought in a lot of teachers from different countries. So a lot of dual language teachers is kind of our goal.
- “It's been on our list of to do's of how we can branch out job fairs.”
- “I hope we can better support and address the needs of our population. Celebrate the diversity of the school community. Trying to hire a more diverse staff, it's hard. I hope we can better meet the needs of our student population.”
- “As someone who is gay, we have more and more families that are similar. I want to make sure the district is also considering that in regard to equity and diversity. We have a lot of kids struggling with gender and identity. That should also come into play when hiring.”

### ***Staff orientation to the district and available access to equity-reporting resources***

The district is intentional in its onboarding and orientation process for new staff members. In documents reviewed by the Mass Insight team, there is evidence that highlights the resources and support structure available to new staff. For example, all staff receive a welcome packet that includes payroll information, reimbursement policies, contact details, and FAQs, among other operations resources to assist with the transition into the district. The reviewed FY23 New Hire Orientation Slides also provide a high level overview of different departmental services and expectations for new staff. While resources offered to staff were informative, there was no available orientation to DEI or culture within the reviewed data sources.

Hudson has published policies around Civil Rights, nondiscrimination, and grievances for staff. While staff indicates general awareness of how to report acts of discrimination, there is not currently a widely- adopted and understood grievance reporting process. The district website page on Civil Rights states, “*Hudson Public Schools is committed to maintaining a work and learning environment free from discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, pregnancy, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital/civil union status, ancestry, place of birth, age, citizenship status, veteran status, political affiliation, genetic information or disability, as defined and required by state and federal laws. Additionally, we prohibit retaliation against individuals who oppose such discrimination and harassment or who participate in an investigation.*” Currently, the School Committee’s policy for non-discrimination does not include a list of numbers to call to report acts of discrimination but does list: the non-discrimination compliance officer as the contact person. The School Committee also has a policy for staff grievances; yet it does not indicate administration will ensure clear procedures for reporting and channels for staff complaints, grievances, and appeals in alignment with recognized employee bargaining units. The policies do not further describe the process for reporting and resolving acts of discrimination. A district staff member noted: “*Grievance reporting, it is interesting. We are going through a review process of non-discrimination, and non-harassment policies and had to go back to the committee for a grievance offer and went to the attorney [to discuss] what is true here and what it is not.*” The current structure does not allow staff to share information or concerns anonymously nor through a confidential modality. Therefore, staff do not have access to a form or reporting structure that limits the bias of designated school reporting staff. District leaders acknowledged the need to update the grievance reporting process, as one staff described, “[*We*] *are trying to get what your policies find and what we need is a procedure for how to deal with the grievance, policies need some revisions.*”

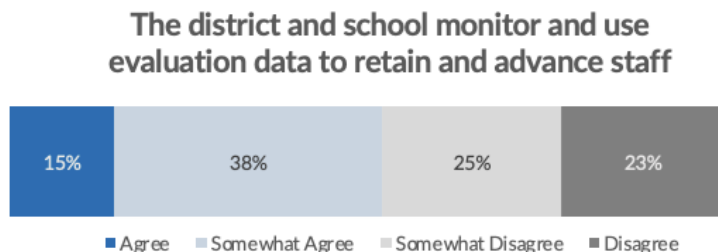
### ***Staff retention***

Hudson has been able to retain staff over the years, which staff named as a district strength. Interviewed educators and leaders recall their time as pupils and their desire to return to the community. Some reflected on their time as students and how interesting it is to be in an administrative role at their alma mater. When asked about district retention, a school leader commented, “*Retention is not a big problem among staff.*” In response to the staff survey prompt, “The district and schools make concerted efforts to retain staff,” 25% agree, 44% somewhat agree, 23%

somewhat disagree, and 9% disagree. However, some members named a need for more intentional retention efforts in the district:

- “I don't feel like they do anything to try to keep me. Other than the director, she expresses she values me. I would be one of the hardest teachers to replace. I don't feel like [the] district admin care[s] about me as a person or a teacher in the school.”
- “I don't know that there is any effort to keep me. What keeps me here is my colleagues and my teammates, my department, not to say I'm not happy, but no real effort to hold on to [the] staff.”
- “Your first-year teaching, you get a mentor. They still mentor me now, they are invested in that sense, but once you have the professional status, it stops. My colleagues keep me here.”

When analyzing retention and the internal system that impacts who remains in the district, school leader survey responses to the prompt on the right, about half of the school leaders believe that the district and schools are using evaluation data to retain and advance staff, while the other half do not believe this is the case. While inconclusive, this data suggests a need for further analysis and coherence between central HR and school-based structures.



## DOMAIN 8: CONDITIONS

**The district prioritizes the success of marginalized student populations and has a strong foundation for developing and implementing equitable structures, systems, policies, and practices that allows schools to meet their community needs.**

As outlined in the Domain 1 findings, the District Improvement Plan (DIP) and aligned School Improvement Plans contain data-driven and student-centered strategic objectives, priorities, and outcomes. The last five reported on publicly available and distributed District Program Updates, which highlight district initiatives and work conducted to support the district strategic plan. Hudson has inclusively considered the needs of marginalized student populations, focusing on students' social, emotional, and individualized learning needs throughout various grade bands. Social, emotional, therapeutic, and child development support programs have been part of the district's student support structure and goals, particularly in the elementary grades.

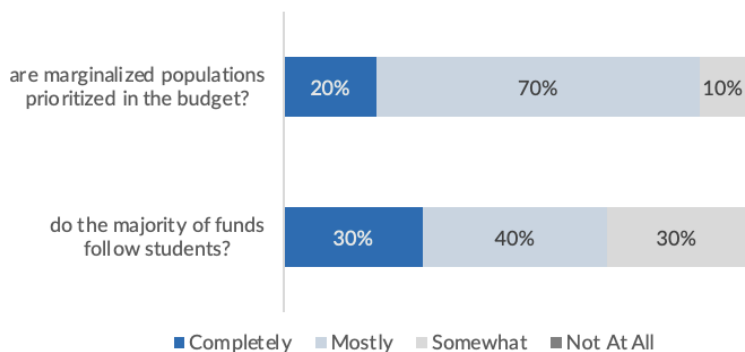
Before the pandemic, the district was actively recruiting educators to support new course and pathway services and defining support structures to fully meet students' needs, including but not limited to therapeutic, STEM, and child development programming. From 2018 to 2020, the overarching service structure for student support focused on academic, behavioral, and attendance markers. The DIPs from those years contained evidence of expanded services and goals to support both student and staffing needs. For example, the 2019-2020 "What's New in the Hudson Public Schools" report noted the Edmentum program, which provided students with online courses and flexible implementation options as a form of adaptive instruction and credit recovery. Additionally, the district focused on building a tech infrastructure to improve student access to virtual resources and learning materials. For example, the district has worked to expand technology services to students in grade 3, increased school and district visibility through an enhanced website, and accounted for emergency generators for two of its schools. Moreover, Hudson's commitment to prioritizing the success of marginalized student populations is evident in the latest strategic plan and school improvement documents.

More recently, services to support marginalized student populations go beyond academics; for example, in the 2022-23 school year, the district held a health fair geared to support Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking families in need of vaccines, dental, and vision care. The district intends to make this fair more accessible and larger in scale to support more families in the future. The district provided interpreters and written translated content to take home to ensure that families received adequate assistance to engage with vendors and partners. Families and staff acknowledge that the district is investing in support that creates inclusive and accessible spaces to serve the community's needs. One staff member shared, ["...we really do try to coordinate as much as we can."](#)

District-provided data points to strategic decision-making protocols and procedures that prioritize the needs of marginalized student populations, as highlighted in the below school leader and staff survey data.



## District Staff: To what extent...



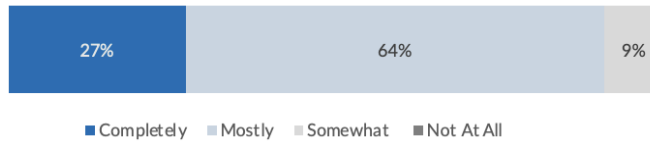
### Existing budget processes use disaggregated data to prioritize the needs of marginalized populations and equitably allocate financial resources to schools and students.

In district fiscal planning documents and school committee fiscal budget reviews, there is significant evidence to signal that the district's financial allocations reflect its mission, vision, and strategic priorities. The proposed FY23 budget aligns with the District's Strategic Financial Plan, which consistently identifies steps to narrow the revenue gap by consolidating and reducing current and future expenditures. The district has intentionally analyzed data to inform projections and prioritize the needs of marginalized students. For example, the projected School Choice revenue for FY23 is \$900,000 and is based on the trend in enrollment of students who do not reside in Hudson. One staff member noted the improvement in district planning efforts and shared, "We were not strategically putting money where students were, with help from town we've implemented a lot of resources, reallocation of resources."

The FY23 proposed budget of \$45,198,515 represents the expenditures anticipated for the 2022-2023 school year. There is an increase of \$1,542,797 or 3.53% from the adopted FY22 budget of \$43,655,718 and accounted for personnel, general expenses, and transportation costs. It includes anticipated salary increases negotiated with the Hudson Education Association, the Hudson Paraeducators Association, the Hudson School Secretaries Association, and the AFL-CIO, Local Council 93 Custodians for the 2022-2023 school year.

To ensure that schools and departmental planning and budgeting are done with fidelity, the district has fundamental data infrastructures, creating opportunities for staff to access disaggregated data that inform the prioritization of marginalized populations and the decision-making process. Data is utilized to understand trends in student academic achievement and progress, the delivery of specialized services and support, and outstanding school needs and support district and school leaders in making informed financial plans and decisions. At the leadership level, staff analyze data quarterly and focus on student performance, primarily at the middle and elementary levels, attendance for students and staff (tardies, absences, and dismissals), and suspensions to understand trends. The team working with the elementary grades focuses on identifying indicators that allow for analyzing success markers and persistent gaps. The high school staff reviews student performance, MCAS, and classroom and grade level data in teams and at the central level.

**District Staff: To what extent are projections of revenues and expenses data-informed and reliable?**



**District communication structures and feedback protocols are developing and seek to incorporate stakeholder feedback to inform decisions and measure programmatic effectiveness.**

As described in the Family and Community Engagement findings, the district has taken intentional steps to engage and create inclusive spaces for the voices of the Hudson community. The district's steps to adequately meet the linguistic and cultural needs of the community should be celebrated and acknowledged as steps forward in the district's equity journey. And while community-facing communication is improving, gaps exist surrounding the feedback structures to support the decision-making process within the district.

Staff at all levels desired better engagement in District Improvement efforts. While there is an understanding of the district's equity journey and Improvement plan, there remain gaps in understanding of who will seek and use staff feedback to make sustainable changes.

## DOMAIN 9: GOVERNANCE

The Hudson School Committee is a governing body that represents district leadership by the community, for the community. Of its seven members, five are parents of Hudson Public Schools students, three are alumni of the school system, and two speak languages other than English. The committee meets one to two times per month on Tuesdays and has five subcommittees: Budget, Policy, Strategic Goals, Superintendent’s Evaluation, and Buildings and Grounds.

The school committee’s strategic goals for 2022-2023 are:

1. Achieve continuous improvement in the academic and social growth of ALL students.
2. Provide a safe and supporting environment for our students and staff.
3. Promote a collaborative relationship with the community and all stakeholders through effective communication and transparency.
4. Encourage progressive development and innovation in our professional practice at all levels within the district.
5. Develop a financially stable and fiscally responsible budget that is responsive to the needs of the district.

**The school committee is engaged and active in district improvement efforts through planning and implementation of the strategic plan. The school committee monitors some data, especially related to strategic priorities, but there is room for improvement in the usage of disaggregated student data to ensure equity in access and outcomes.**

The Hudson School Committee has supported the development of the District Improvement Plan (DIP) and related yearly Action Plans with specific strategic priorities and measurable outcomes by working with district leadership to set priorities and create goals based on district needs. According to the school committee meeting minutes, the committee discussed the DIP three times in the 2021-2022 school year. In the fall, the superintendent presented the final DIP to the school committee, supported by a team of school leaders who each explained the various strategic priorities. A mid-year review of the DIP took place in February, led by the superintendent, and included data reporting on progress toward the goals in the yearly Action Plan. An end-of-year report delivered by the superintendent had a similar structure.

School committee members shared varying degrees of agreement with the statement, “The governing body routinely monitors the implementation and impact data of its strategic priorities,” three members somewhat agreed, and the other two somewhat disagreed, indicating an awareness that the school committee could be reviewing data related to strategic priorities more frequently.

Other data presented in the superintendent’s reports and discussed by the school committee in the 2021-2022 school year include enrollment and class size data for the upcoming year and the previous year’s MCAS data, which were not disaggregated by student subgroups, and graduation and dropout data, which was disaggregated. When the participating school committee members were asked on the survey to respond to “The governing body routinely monitors disaggregated student, school, and district data,” 40% somewhat agreed and 60% somewhat disagreed.

**School Committee: The governing body routinely monitors the implementation and impact data of its strategic priorities.**



As one school committee member said, “We try to stay on top of any kind of metrics related to the district improvement plans... But I feel like there’s room for improvement there in terms of trying to disaggregate some of that data in better ways where we can paint that picture of those kinds of smaller populations.”

**There is not yet a shared understanding of equity or equitable practices within the existing school committee structure, directly impacting the related policy and decision-making process.**

Recent initiatives led or supported by the school committee include systems to support multilingual learners and high needs students, the new bilingual program at the Farley Elementary School, and discussions regarding a desire for more diverse students in AP and honors courses. With the school committee as a critical partner, the district has made progress on its equity journey, yet a more universal understanding of equity in Hudson would strengthen the foundation of this work in the district.

On April 5, 2022, the school committee unanimously voted to approve a contract with Mass Insight for a district-wide equity audit. In focus groups, school committee members reported that they do not receive any common equity training, and there is not yet a consistent understanding or definition of equity among school committee members, nor are there existing equity-related training programs for the committee or subcommittees. As the foundation of district leadership and guidance, the school committee’s lack of a unified approach to equity work is directly connected to the need for all staff throughout the district, at every level, to have a common understanding of equity and inclusion.

One member explained, “I don't think that there is training. I actually think that people only come to the table with the knowledge that they have. And I do think this is a huge problem because... I do believe that there are members on the school committee who have no interest in equity measures and may not even understand the importance of it.” A district leader shared a similar sentiment about mixed support for equity measures among the school committee: “We have some members who fully support what we do, and some members who either don't understand what we're doing or do understand and are trying to undermine what we're doing.” The five school committee survey participants were fairly evenly spread (one agreed, one somewhat agreed, two somewhat disagreed, one disagreed) on both statements: “The governing body prioritizes system-wide equity when exercising its policy-making responsibilities” and “The governing body holds its members accountable for modeling and advancing a more equitable and inclusive district culture and successful outcomes for all stakeholders.”

**The makeup of the school committee is still evolving to reflect demographic changes in Hudson and equitably represent the community.**

Although committee members collectively have deep roots in Hudson, many stakeholders do not feel that the school committee is adequately representative of the district population or that it regularly seeks representative voices in the community (particularly those from marginalized populations) to inform their work on the school committee. A school committee member commented, “Our board is not diverse. The union board is not diverse. It's a lot of white people and... many of them have been in the district a long time... So it comes with a sense of history, which I don't think is necessarily a diverse one.” A parent shared a similar concern: “In our school committee, there's not a single Brazilian parent that I've seen. There's not a single black family represented in any of our leadership that I've seen.” Another school committee member added, “I will admit we probably have some blind spots when it comes to equity across the district... I feel like I'm in a demographic where I probably am less aware of certain things that probably should be brought to the surface.”

## ABOUT THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations describe the next steps that the district can take to create greater equity, access, and opportunities for students, staff, and families. Equity is a journey, and as with any journey the district embarks upon, it has to work through layers of stakeholders, structures, policies, and practices to understand, determine, and support changes. As in any journey, different people in the community have different levels of engagement with and exposure to the full spectrum of the district's strategic work. Findings in the previous pages reflect great alignment and progress of leaders to continue this work, as the district now moves forward to bring school staff, students, families, and the school committee along in understanding and supporting next steps toward creating a work and learning environment that is inclusive of all stakeholders and focused on the success of every student.

The recommendations that follow are designed with the district's context in mind, acknowledging staff capacity, resources, existing initiatives, and timelines. The recommendations contain evidence-based immediate, short-term, and long-term next steps, as well as resources and considerations to guide decision-making. Many recommendations are not quick fixes that one or two people can solve, but rather parts of a series of intentional and coordinated actions among various stakeholders that recognize and leverage current strengths, foundations, and work already underway, as well as access and opportunity barriers.

It is important to mention that a district-wide commitment to equity and equity mindset that informs all decision-making is essential to not only understand where practices and policies are disproportionately impacting some stakeholders, but also to understand the impact—whether intended or unintended—of adjustments to policies and practices. A shared commitment to equity, particularly from district and school staff, is critical to sustaining equity-focused improvement efforts.

## RECOMMENDATION 1: District-Wide Commitment to Equity

### Build collective awareness and responsibility for equitable practices.

Hudson Public Schools in its equity journey has invested critical capital to mobilize resources to understand and address issues of inequities within its community. As outlined in the findings throughout this report, Hudson has a strong leadership and student support foundation. While there is individual awareness of the district's journey and commitment to equity and meeting the needs of all, with a particular focus on members of marginalized populations, there is not yet a shared awareness and responsibility for equitable practices. District and school leaders shared that they have an understanding of why equity is important in addressing and meeting student needs, but conveyed different ideas about what that means in practice.

Creating equitable and sustainable practices at the district and school levels requires a collective understanding and commitment to the betterment of system-wide structures. It is important for staff at all levels to have an understanding of why and how their work and engagement in creating equitable practices impact the success and educational outcomes of all students and their fellow staff. Creating a system collective where individuals see themselves as part of a team that works to eradicate inequities allows for open dialogue and conversations regarding individual and collective needs, which are challenging particularly at first as everyone develops comfort and skill in tackling difficult yet necessary topics. There are multiple avenues that the district can take to position itself to adequately orient its leaders and build its equity muscle, such as:

- **Communicate the importance of and process to address equity.** Defining a process to engage all requires clear, concrete, and differentiated communication that allows stakeholders to understand their role in furthering equity.
- **Define terminology that allows leaders to define a vision and theory of action for equity within Hudson.** Collaboratively define diversity, equity, and inclusion in Hudson in a way that celebrates linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as other ways of examining diversity. In addition, clearly articulate and establish what equity means in the context of the Hudson Public Schools' community and its leadership structures in an accessible manner.
- **Define a vision and theory of change for equity in Hudson that aligns with the district's definition of equity and clarifies what it means for the community,** as well as specific student groups and/or individual students. The theory of change should also be aligned with the district's identified strategic priorities so that leaders can utilize the outlined practices in their SIPs and overall development. The process for creating both the terminology that paves the way for a vision and theory of action should be developed with the engagement of leaders and various stakeholder groups, and be grounded in a continuous journey. Coherence will be important and is necessary with the current district vision, mission, goals, and theory of change [The Unfinished Leader- A School Leadership Framework for Growth and Development \(Micahel Lubelfeld, Nick Polyak, and PJ Caposey\)](#) is a resource that can help leaders navigate the conversations of equity and reflect on their role as change agents.
- **Communicate the equity audit origins, purpose, process, and results to multiple stakeholders to build a common understanding of Hudson's equity journey to date.** Leaders and the Hudson community, in general, should have an understanding of the district's efforts to address issues of equity and attention to create sustainable change. While communicating the audit findings and results, focus on supporting stakeholders to reflect on what the recommendations may mean for them and/or provide additional input as needed. Additionally, consider multiple audiences: district leaders, board members, central office staff, school leaders and staff, students, families, and community partners.

- A communication plan will be critical in ensuring consistency and clarity of messaging. Plan for the who, what, when, where, how, and why of communication for multiple stakeholders, such as district leaders, board members, central office staff, school leaders and staff, students, families, and community partners.

### **Allocate capacity and resources to the organization of equity at the district, department, and individual levels.**

Equity work needs to have a defined and widely understood place in Hudson's organizational structure, to clarify how multiple leaders and stakeholders contribute to and share accountability for the district's equity vision. At the moment, it is not clear to stakeholders who is ultimately responsible for equity in the district, where equity work lives in the organizational structure, and how it is resourced and sustainable. While equity work may live informally with specific district leaders (or be embedded/assumed/inferred), there is an opportunity to clarify what equity work means for all departments and stakeholder groups, who is responsible for what, in what ways, and to what end to ensure accountability for improved student outcomes for all. Hudson can begin this process by articulating and communicating what the district's equity vision and theory of action means for stakeholder groups, including the superintendent, board members, central office leaders, and staff, schools leaders, and staff, students, families and guardians, and community partners, so that all understand and take ownership for their related roles, responsibilities so that equity does not live with an individual.

Key activities and steps might include dedicating capacity and resources:

- **Determine and articulate where equity work lives in the organizational structure** (i.e., the who, what, where, and when of ensuring progress towards a more equitable and inclusive state, e.g., DEI department).
- **Ensure all district leaders own the work of equity**, see the throughlines for their roles as individuals, and collaborate as a team and across departments to bring the equity vision to life and to ensure coherence.

### **Create opportunities for continuous learning and development**

Empowering stakeholders at multiple levels to communicate and reinforce the district's vision and theory of action for equity with their respective teams, schools will strengthen the district's commitment to equity. As discussed in recommendation 4, there are opportunities to orient and develop everyone's equity lens within the district. Leverage strong connections with school leaders to be champions for the district's equity work, e.g., support principals in building their skill, will, and resource bank to effectively work with staff and the broader community to build a common understanding and shared investment in the equity vision.

## RECOMMENDATION 2: Equitable Student Support & Intervention Structures

**Leverage flexible academic blocks at the secondary level (Hawk Block and ARC) to build out Tier 2 academic interventions for students needing extra support.**

Hudson Public Schools has already made a commitment to its Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), creating frameworks for academics, attendance, and social emotional behavioral supports in 2018, and implementation tools for each tier in each strand in 2019. Both the current (2022-2025) and recent (2018-2021) District Improvement Plans include strategic priorities and action steps related to MTSS. At present, the main vehicle for providing additional targeted instruction for students in middle and high school is through the flexible block called HawkBlock (middle school) or ARC (high school). Stakeholders agree that HawkBlock and ARC are valuable opportunities for students to meet with teachers or catch up on work, but there is not yet a structure to effectively support targeted intervention. This block can be leveraged more intentionally, without replacing its function as a flexible period for students and teachers, for planned and data-driven Tier 2 academic interventions, which will further support marginalized students and student populations who are not yet achieving at the performance levels or success rates of their peers.

Key activities and steps might include:

- **Examine the elementary-level Response to Intervention (RTI) system for best practices.** Academic intervention in the elementary schools takes place largely through RTI. With consideration for the many differences between primary and secondary education, leverage internal expertise by talking to elementary school teachers and observing the RTI system for any structures or approaches that can be applied to middle and high school.
- **Support teachers to establish or build out data collection and analysis routines to identify students needing additional academic instruction or support.** Content directors can support secondary staff in their departments to develop sustainable systems that result in short lists of students needing the next level of intervention, perhaps weekly or by skill area. Data collection systems should be easy-to-use and quickly responsive, so students needing extra help can get it from HawkBlock or ARC the same week as the skill was taught, with enough time for them to quickly catch up.
- **Set an expectation that each teacher uses a portion of their HawkBlock/ARC time on a weekly basis for intervention, for which students are scheduled ahead of time and required to attend.**
  - *Create systems for regular scheduling* of intervention that works with teachers' schedules, perhaps by department (e.g. M/W literacy, T/Th math) to ensure that students scheduled for multiple subjects can attend each.
  - *Plan to share lists of students* tapped for intervention on a weekly or biweekly basis, disseminated either by the teacher or through the HawkBlock/ARC staff member (or both).
  - *Determine a system of accountability* for student attendance that minimizes disruptions to learning time.
  - *Develop a plan to communicate with and update families* about their child(ren)'s progress regularly in intervention or alerting them if students have not been attending.
- **Track data on which students are assigned to intervention and how often, to surface patterns across grade levels, subjects, and subgroups.** A key part of a successful and sustainable MTSS practice is monitoring interventions over time and adjusting the approach as needed based on the data. Lists of students tapped for these Tier 2 interventions should be kept centrally and examined in ongoing MTSS conversations. School- and district-level leaders might look at this data with a few questions in mind, for



example:

- Are some individual students frequently in intervention for a certain subject or several subjects? Is Tier 2 the appropriate level of intervention for these students or could there be other supports in place?
- Is there a department whose intervention lists are usually longer or shorter than the others'? This could have implications for in-classroom support practices, data collection practices, etc.
- Are students from a particular racial, ethnic, or socio-economic group being tapped for intervention at a different rate than their peers? Is there possible implicit bias at play, or is more needed to support some students?
- **Share data and any patterns or conclusions with the school committee.** Examining disaggregated data of students receiving Tier 2 support during the school day will help the school committee monitor patterns over time to determine whether additional resources need to be allocated to support students' academic needs.

**Key Resource:** [Multi-Tiered System of Support Blueprint](#) (Massachusetts DESE)

## RECOMMENDATION 3: Social-Emotional Learning Structures & Educator Support

**Infuse dedicated time for relationship building into the current SEL structure at the middle and high schools.**

As described in [Domain 3, Student Readiness to Learn](#), teachers and students overall\* appreciate the newly adopted Choose Love curriculum, but secondary educators and students don't yet feel supported to engage with challenging topics within the SEL classroom. Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, a nationally recognized expert in social-emotional learning (SEL), writes that "effective learning depends on secure attachments; affirming relationships; rich, hands-on learning experiences; and explicit integration of social, emotional, and academic skills." Hudson Public Schools has taken the decisive and important step of bringing the Choose Love curriculum into all its schools for explicit SEL instruction; now, prioritizing time for relationship-building during the SEL blocks at the secondary levels will support the creation of an affirming, emotionally safe space for each student to grow their SEL skills with a trusted adult.

\*We want to note that at the time of data collection, in fall/winter 2022, the high school had not yet implemented Choose Love or the SEL block. We anticipate that our recommendations will apply to both middle and high school, but the data leading to this priority area was from middle school teachers and students only.

Key activities and steps might include:

- **Conduct research on the “why” and “how” of relationship-building within the classroom.** Share, discuss, and align as a district leadership team, including working with the school committee, so they can understand the initiative. Some recommended resources include:
  - [Whole Child Design: Student Relationship Structures](#)
  - [The most important class in high school isn't what you think](#)
  - [SEL 3 Signature Practices Playbook by Casel](#)
  - [Five Tips for Teaching Advisory Classes at Your School](#)
- **Reframe the expectations of the SEL block to include a focus on relationship-building.** Certain times of the year (for example, the beginning of the school year, or the first week after a long break), could be dedicated entirely to relationships, with regular “connector” time throughout the year (the first 5 minutes of each period, the entire first period of each week, etc.).
- **Create space in staff SEL/Choose Love development opportunities to share the rationale behind dedicated relationship-building time.** Include time for staff at various grade bands to learn how to identify and adapt connecting activities and strategies to the needs of their students. We recommend letting staff actually try some out in groups, if possible.
- **Build an easily-accessible library of relationship-building activities for teachers to contribute to and pull from, depending on the needs and interests of their group of students.** Consider two categories:
  - Daily check-in and check-out strategies, for example:
    - [Building a Better Check-In](#)
    - [Mood Meter](#)
    - [Sheep Scale](#)
    - [Feelings Emoji Chart](#)
    - [Snowball Toss](#)
    - [Four Corners](#)
  - Longer or full-period activities, for example:
    - [Fostering Relationships in the Classroom](#)

- [Trust Activities](#)
- [38 Awesome Team Building Games and Activities for Kids](#)
- **Regularly highlight connecting strategies**, perhaps by using a portion of professional development sessions to either model a strategy or ask teachers to share successful strategies they've used recently, or highlight "a connector to try this week" when sending out the week's Choose Love lesson plans.
- **At the high school, consider working SEL into the schedule regularly, perhaps as part of an ARC rotation.** Frequent contact with other SEL group participants and the Choose Love curriculum will support both relationship-building and growing SEL skills among older students.

## RECOMMENDATION 4: Professional Learning & Development for Instructional and Administrative Staff

Provide professional learning/development opportunities and ongoing support for stakeholders to develop their skills and comfort in engaging in courageous conversations about DEI and equity-based practices while aligning staff feedback and evaluation structures to district priorities.

As described in [Domain 6, School Instructional Leadership](#), Hudson Public Schools has a mission and vision for professional development and provides a variety of professional development opportunities for all stakeholders such as Request to Attend Conference and Employee Reimbursement for Travel/Conferences. Staff can gain a deeper understanding of and application of their knowledge and skills if they are given professional learning opportunities. To translate learning into practice, district investments must be reflected in staff evaluations and feedback systems, as well as accountability expectations.

Professional development experiences that improve courageous conversation skills and capacity are adaptable to many aspects of the staff's job and interactions with staff, students, and families. The skill of facilitating courageous conversations about sticky topics like race, diversity, and discrimination develops as a result of time and interaction with others. By providing opportunities for leadership, educators, support staff, students, families, and school committee members to have courageous conversations within small and large groups, all district stakeholders will become comfortable having courageous conversations based on identity and mixed groups. The following recommendations suggest actions to create professional development opportunities for stakeholders to build their skills and comfort in engaging in courageous conversations about race, diversity, and discrimination.

Key activities and steps might include:

- Leverage existing professional development systems to actively embed the newly identified vision and theory of action regarding equity. Underlining and focusing on the importance of equity in the training and development structures will strengthen coherence and create consistency in the planning and implementation of district-wide systems. To bring the process of revising the existing professional development and learning structure, the district can:
  - Audit the current learning modules and their alignment to existing strategic priorities and identified equity vision and theory of action. This work, while integral to the district's equity journey, will require the mobilization of resources in terms of human capital.
  - Identity a team of district and school leaders and educators who can spearhead the revision process and monitor the piloting of development sessions/modules.
    - The team can identify learning opportunities within and outside of the district to include in the updated professional learning calendar and accompanying resources, and create a system of tracking for accessibility and accountability for the professional development of all staff to ensure alignment with the equity goals of the district (tracking conferences, PD, etc.)
  - Throughout this process, we recommend that the district and newly identified team consistently and proactively seek staff feedback to inform changes to the evaluation process, priorities & structures

In alignment with the recommendations regarding professional development and learning, there are outstanding

opportunities around the evaluation process that can better reflect district-wide expectations and behaviors. The spring 2023 efforts to revamp the evaluation system will create more consistency among evaluators and provide much-needed support and guidance to educators across the district. As the district embarks on this process, staff need to be supported about how to provide feedback on how the evaluation and feedback process can help them improve their professional development. To this end, consider:

- When evaluating, school administrators and school leaders interact with their staff, they can gain a great deal of insight into how they perceive the evaluation structure and how they wish to improve.
- Whenever collecting feedback from staff, make sure the participation is anonymous to allow them to express their true feelings without the risk of reciprocity occurring.
- Train evaluators on how to use the evaluation process
- Stakeholders will increase their comfort and be better prepared to engage in conversations about and across lines of difference. Some resources to get started include:
  - [“Five Ways to Have Better Conversations Across Difference.”](#) an article from Greater Good Magazine
  - [Continuing Courageous Conversations](#), a toolkit for organizations
  - [The Cost of the Conversation Gap](#) on the Workplace, a white paper on having tough conversations in the workplace
  - [Fixed ability mindset and racial achievement gaps](#), a journal article from NIH

## SUMMARY

Hudson Public Schools is a district on an equity journey, working towards fully realizing its mission, vision, and values through its strategic plan. There is an acknowledgment from members of the Hudson community of its equity journey and internally in creating positive and inclusive learning spaces for all. Its values, mission, and vision are clearly understood and adopted by staff and members of the community and are a focus for the upcoming academic year. There is significant evidence of the district's commitment to its strategic objective to; *Develop a culture that promotes equity, eliminates opportunity gaps, and empowers students and adults to build strong relationships, psychological safety, and mutual accountability*, in its instructional practices, coordinated academic support, social-emotional learning support, and plans to develop a qualified and highly diverse workforce that representative of its students.

Through the equity audit process, district leaders, school leaders, staff, students, and families have all participated and shared their perspectives and ideas in order to support the district's next steps. As the following student and family reflections indicate:

- "Our school helps make a[n] inclu[sive] environment for people and they make sure everyone feels and is included."; "They have a good dress code and they aren't too overtly sexist or racist. They're a relatively inclusive environment, especially for a big small town. I personally enjoy the teaching style here, but I think I also take a good number of classes that are more discussion based than notes based so that experience depends on each person and who their teachers are and what their teaching style preference is."- Student
- "...for substantial change the town and community need to change - and the schools can really help educate children and families about the importance of learning about and respecting all races, cultures, sexual orientation, identity, etc." -Family member

The artifact review and stakeholder feedback throughout the equity audit process has been reflective of the district-wide shift that is in process, with some stakeholders seeing recent growth and some stakeholders seeing the room for growth remains.

With the equity audit in hand, the support of dedicated and equity-minded leaders, and a community that wants "Every student feels nurtured, challenged, and confident to embrace the future," the district is well poised to take its next steps on its equity journey and create a more welcoming work and learning environment for all stakeholders.

# APPENDIX

## Mass Insight’s District Equity Framework

At Mass Insight, *We envision a world in which student achievement and related life outcomes no longer correlate with race, gender, ethnicity, social class, or zip code because all students have equitable opportunities, supports, and access to quality education.* We believe the school is the unit of change, and our work with schools and districts begins by understanding local strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth. Our research-informed [Theory of Action](#) describes in greater detail the various aspects of education systems we believe support the structures, policies, practices, and mindsets necessary for school leaders and staff to develop, implement, and sustain equitable learning environments for all students.

Mass Insight is fundamentally committed to quality educational experiences for all students. We also intentionally focus on the access, opportunity, and success outcomes of marginalized and underserved populations to ensure equity for all. Our District Equity Framework is the lens through which we understand the current reality of district systems and the extent to which equity and inclusivity is experienced by stakeholders, which includes district and school staff, students, families and guardians, partners, and community members. As partners in a district’s equity journey, Mass Insight uses district-selected definitions for key terms during our partnerships in order to create community ownership and align with the district’s vision, common language, and the work already underway.

| Domains  | Highest Performing District Descriptors  |
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| <p><b>VISION, STRATEGY &amp; CULTURE</b><br/> <i>The district focuses on creating an inclusive environment for all stakeholders and strategically addressing data-informed disparities in student performance and success outcomes</i></p> | <p>The district vision, mission, and strategic plan create the conditions for an equitable organizational culture. The district clearly defines the concepts of equity, diversity, and inclusion, and cultivates district-wide understanding and engagement of its pursuit of equity. The district’s strategic plan explicitly addresses data-informed disparities in student performance and success outcomes. The strategic plan consists of student-centered goals, strategies, key performance indicators, and a clear theory of change to achieve those goals. The district has a process for monitoring plan implementation and impact, as well as communicating and engaging stakeholders about its impact.</p> <p>The district culture welcomes and embraces the identities and perspectives of all students, families, staff, and the district community regardless of racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic, sexual orientation, gender, ability, socio-economic, and age differences. The district supports inclusive spaces for staff, students, and families (e.g., staff of color, English learner parent advisory council, LGBTQIA+ students or staff, special education parent advisory council, staff with disabilities, etc.). Staff accept responsibility for the success of all students and for creating and modeling an inclusive culture.</p> |
| <p><b>EQUITABLE STUDENT ACCESS &amp; OUTCOMES</b><br/> <i>Data and monitoring practices indicate a district-wide focus on ensuring equitable student access, success, and outcomes.</i></p>  | <p>District policies, practices, and mindsets reflect a commitment to equity as evidenced by disaggregated data monitoring practices and resulting actions that focus on decreasing disparities and ensuring equitable representation in student access, success, and outcomes. Examples of which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Enrollment, opportunity, and access in advanced academics, college and career courses and pathways (including college prep, military, CTE), transportation, and extracurricular activities;</li> <li>● Programs and support services such as post-secondary planning; special education and English language development programs; behavior, physical, emotional, and psychological health supports; and</li> </ul>  |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success outcomes, such as pass/fail course rates, discipline, advanced academic and pathway programs, drop out rates, state and local formative and summative assessments, and graduation rates.</li> </ul> <p>A multi-tiered system of support at the district and school levels proactively monitors and measures students’ social-emotional, academic, and developmental needs. In addition to complying with laws and regulations, the district prioritizes the support services for select populations, particularly students with disabilities, English learners, gifted/talented students, and economically disadvantaged students.</p>   |
| <p><b>STUDENT READINESS TO LEARN</b><br/> <i>The district ensures students experience an inclusive learning environment, as well as social emotional, developmental, and mental health support needed to fully engage in learning.</i></p> | <p>The district, with guidance from students and families, supports schools’ implementation of policies, systems, and practices that create safe, welcoming, and inclusive classroom and school environments. All stakeholders work to recognize and embrace students’ unique identities, and all staff have access to the necessary professional learning opportunities to support students’ social-emotional and identity development. As a result, all students feel safe, included, supported, and a sense of belonging in the school environment.</p> <p>The district and schools have evidence-based systems and practices to monitor and support students’ social-emotional, engagement, mental health, and developmental needs. These systems identify the unique needs of students and families and ensure the connection of resources and support to stakeholders. Collaborative internal processes and structures, as well as external partnerships, ensure students and their families have the necessary resources, interventions, and support services to enable all students to fully engage in learning.</p>  |
| <p><b>CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY SUSTAINING INSTRUCTION</b><br/> <i>Students experience rigorous instruction that is culturally and linguistically sustaining and validates their identities, needs, and interests.</i></p>             | <p>The district has a vision and plan for developing and sustaining cultural and linguistic mindsets and practices to ensure high-quality, standards-aligned, rigorous instruction for all students in all schools. Instructional staff leverage and/or design curricular and instructional resources to provide culturally authentic and responsive learning experiences that offer diverse perspectives and celebrate the voices of historically underrepresented identities. All instructional staff receive aligned developmental feedback to improve and refine their practice. All instructional staff have time and support to develop culturally and linguistically sustaining units, lessons, and various metrics to measure content mastery, all of which are designed to offer choice and engage students in learning activities that empower them as leaders of their learning and in their community.</p> <p>As a result, learning takes place in environments designed to be inclusive of and validate students’ identities, experiences, needs, and interests. Instructional staff facilitate coordinated and differentiated learning experiences that acknowledge and fully support students’ neurodiversity and oral and receptive language development. The district has a tiered system of instructional support at the classroom, school, and district levels that supports students with the necessary standards-based interventions, enrichment, and acceleration programming to ensure equitable access, opportunity, and success.</p> |
| <p><b>FAMILY &amp; COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</b><br/> <i>District communication and family engagement opportunities are inclusive, accessible, and leverage families as partners in</i></p>   | <p>The district has a vision for family and community engagement centered on inclusive approaches for communicating with families, the community, and partner organizations and leveraging them as partners in furthering student success. The district pursues effective communication methods to reach marginalized populations and demonstrates flexibility at the school and district level to ensure access for all families. District and school interactions demonstrate cultural and</p>  |



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| <p><i>their child(ren)'s learning experience</i></p>   | <p>linguistic competence and respect for families' and the community's cultures, races and ethnicities, and other aspects of identity. The diversity of the district is celebrated through opportunities to share and learn about various aspects of members' identities.</p> <p>Family, community, and partner input and feedback is routinely sought in multiple and accessible ways. Family, community, and partner organization voices are present on representative committees and teams that reflect the district and community's current diversity. Families are supported and engaged in their child(ren)'s educational success through learning partnerships. Communication, feedback, and participation opportunities yield engagement from families, community members, and partner organizations that furthers district initiatives and the educational success of all students.</p>   |
| <p><b>SCHOOL INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP</b><br/> <i>District conditions ensure principals can leverage their people, time, programs, and financial allocations to focus on school-level needs and prioritize the access, opportunities, and success outcomes of marginalized students.</i></p>                                   | <p>District support and conditions enable principals to focus on and promote student learning by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● designing staffing processes and structures that result in qualified, effective, and diverse staff aligned to the school's instructional model, SIP priorities, and school community;</li> <li>● supporting school staff to improve their professional practice to increase student access and learning outcomes;</li> <li>● implementing instructional and programmatic approaches that support students' academic, social-emotional, identity, and behavior development;</li> <li>● leveraging staffing structures and schedules to ensure ongoing staff professional learning opportunities, as well as collaboration opportunities for staff to monitor disaggregated student data to identify students' academic, social-emotional, identity, and behavior needs and successful outcomes; and</li> <li>● aligning the school's financial resources with SIP priorities to ensure the access and success of all students, particularly prioritizing the needs of marginalized student populations.</li> </ul> <p>To do this, the voices of staff, students, and families are amplified to inform decisions and school priorities by understanding the extent to which schools are meeting the needs of all students. Professional learning opportunities for principals are aligned with school and district priorities. As a result, principals model, lead, and develop an inclusive, data-guided, and equity-minded school culture in which all staff members accept responsibility for the success of each student.</p> |
| <p><b>TALENT DEVELOPMENT</b><br/> <i>The district's talent development strategy focuses on bringing in new and diverse staff, as well as ensuring ongoing professional learning opportunities for all staff to create an inclusive work and learning environment that reflects district values, priorities, and needs.</i></p> | <p>The district has a non-discriminatory approach and plan to attract, recruit, hire, develop, and retain a highly diverse staff in all positions that is reflective of the student population, the community, and the increasingly diverse national population. A system to grow and cultivate prospective hires results in a qualified and diverse candidate pool for each opening and coordinated efforts to support staff with testing and certification processes. Staffing needs are accurately forecast, and collaboration with both internal and external pipeline partners increases the recruitment of new and diverse staff. All hiring processes (e.g. job postings, interview questions, etc.) reflect the district's vision and commitment to equity and ensure that candidates share these values. Students and families are included in the hiring process. Targets for hiring diverse candidates are set, monitored, and reported throughout the hiring process.</p> <p>All new staff experience induction and mentoring support during their initial years in their role. Initial and ongoing professional learning opportunities for all staff focuses</p>  |

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|  | <p>on developing the skills, mindsets, culture, and practices necessary to enact district and school priorities. Schools are supported in creating inclusive work environments that increase staff retention by ensuring they have the necessary resources, tools, and opportunities to do so. The staff evaluation process reflects district priorities, recognizes strengths, and supports areas of improvement. Equity-driven evaluation data is monitored and used to retain and advance staff in alignment with district values, priorities, and needs.</p>   |
| <p><b>CONDITIONS</b><br/> <i>The district invests and aligns resources including time, staffing, finances, and programs to prioritize marginalized populations and ensures schools have the necessary flexibility with those resources to address their community's unique needs</i></p> | <p>District leaders prioritize the success of marginalized populations when establishing goals, making decisions, collaboratively organizing support to schools, and reporting outcomes. District office departments (academics, operational, and cultural) implement clear and equitable structures, systems, processes, and policies for addressing school and student needs, and coordinate their services and communication with schools and staff. The district seeks and utilizes stakeholder input and feedback to inform decisions and measure its effectiveness. District departments differentiate support to align with school needs, prioritize marginalized populations, and establish conditions (i.e. people, money, time, program, policy) that allow schools to address their unique community and its needs. Specifically,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● District financial allocations reflect its mission, vision, and strategic priorities. Projections of revenues and expenses are data-informed and reliable, the majority of funds follow students, and marginalized populations are prioritized. The district budget process equitably appropriates financial resources to school and student needs, as informed by data.</li> <li>● The district has the necessary data infrastructure and supports all staff to access and use current qualitative and quantitative data to inform decisions and actions. District office leaders utilize and model coherent district data-management procedures for analyzing and progress monitoring disaggregated qualitative and quantitative data sources on students' academic, developmental, and social-emotional progress and success.</li> <li>● The district supports schools to manage internal and external partnerships and evaluate their effectiveness in supporting student and family needs. Partnerships with local and regional organizations are strategically developed and leveraged to address outstanding student and family needs.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>GOVERNANCE</b><br/> <i>The governing body prioritizes and models equity and inclusivity in its decision-making processes.</i></p>  | <p>The governing body prioritizes system-wide equity when exercising its policy making responsibilities and holds its members and district leaders accountable for modeling and advancing a more equitable and inclusive district culture and success outcomes for all stakeholders. The governing body routinely monitors disaggregated student, school, and district data, as well as implementation and impact data reflective of district strategic priorities. The district's governing body represents the population of the community and the district, and members of the governing body seek out and elevate the voices of staff, students, and families from marginalized populations to inform resource allocation and policy decisions. Local collective bargaining processes and agreements reflect district values and ensure equitable and inclusive work environments for all staff.</p>   |

## Citations & References

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