

Lowell Public Schools

# Strategic Plan Update

October 5, 2020

# 1 + 4 Year Strategic Plan

2020 – 2021 +





## Strategic Planning Initiative: Developing the 1 + 4 Year Plan for the Lowell Public Schools

In converting from a 5-year planning process to a 1 + 4 year strategic plan focusing on next year's (2020 – 2021) actionable objectives, it is important that the principles of the long-term plan remain intact.

### Core Beliefs:

- A high-quality education is a fundamental civil right of every child.
- Teaching and Learning is the core of work.
- Families are and students' first teachers.
- Sustainable school improvement requires hard and steady work over time.
- Every adult in the system is accountable for the success of all students; the entire community is responsible for their success.

### Strategy:

- Employing differentiated levels of autonomy.
- Implementing systemic and instructional alignment.
- Empowering students and families through choice.
- Ensuring reciprocal accountability by all stakeholders.

### Fundamental Commitments:

- Eliminate the racial, ethnic and linguistic achievement and opportunity gaps among all students.
- Provide equitable funding and resources among the district's diverse schools.
- Engage all families with courtesy, dignity, respect and cultural understanding.

### Strategic Priorities:

- Increasing access to early learning opportunities.
- Increasing access to high-performing seats.
- Aligning secondary programming with post-secondary opportunities.
- Leveraging the rich diversity of the Lowell community to serve the interests of LPS students.



## Strategic Planning Initiative: Developing the 1 + 4 Year Plan for the Lowell Public Schools

COVID-19 public health crisis and related school closures has altered reality of LPS and the world.

While the 1 + 4 year plan envisions future progress, it is premised on a **four-part strategy of COVID-19 readiness and responsiveness.**

### Physical Health:

LPS facilities will undergo robust disinfectant sanitation and other **enhanced cleaning tactics.**

Strict **hygiene requirements** will be imposed at all grade levels.

Logistical modifications will be made to account for any **physical distancing** strategies advised by public health officials.

### Fiscal Prudence:

LPS will conduct itself with **heightened cautiousness** due to revenue uncertainties at both the state and municipal level.

All investments will be scrutinized for implications regarding **long-term goals** and any basis for **immediate urgency.**

### Mental Wellness:

LPS will prioritize **trauma informed practices** in anticipation of students' mental health challenges precipitated by or exacerbated by the crisis.

School leaders will be advised on practices to **support both staff and families** experiencing anxiety related to the crisis.

**SEL support systems** will continue to be emphasized for the purpose of ensuring students' educational needs continue to be met in the wake of the 2020 closure and amid ongoing uncertainty.

### Maintaining Flexibility:

LPS will employ strategies to **maintain programmatic and organizational flexibility** both to meet the needs of students in the wake of the 2020 closures and to ensure maximum adaptability to logistical challenges and/or additional disruptions during the 2020 - 2021 school year.



# Strategic Planning Initiative: Overarching Goal Areas



Improve **academic achievement** at every LPS school site.

Improve **operational efficiency** across LPS.

Ensure that every LPS school enjoys a **safe and welcoming culture**.

Increase LPS **community engagement and empower families** as partners.



# Progress on Year 1 Goals

## *July 2019 to July 2020*



The 2019-2020 school year was a year marked by two distinct periods, including:

- 1) A period of significant change and progress that generated important momentum in favor of large-scale and long-term improvement across the system from July through March; and
- 2) A rapid redesign of every aspect of the district's core and ancillary services in the spring in response to the statewide COVID-19 shutdown of in-person learning for the remainder of the academic year.



# Improve Academics & Student Achievement at Every School Site



- Developed a model of differentiated autonomy to provide schools with the support they needed when they needed it while recognizing that the people closest to our students – teachers, parents, principals and support staff – were best positioned to make school-based decisions on behalf of our students
- Implemented the district's first comprehensive approach to turning around seven chronically underperforming schools through a model of targeted, on-site support and progress monitoring (*Renaissance Network*)
- Launched the District's first ever Early College in partnership with Middlesex Community College and Project Learn, enabling Lowell High School students to earn a full year of college credits prior to graduation, with 150 students enrolling in year 1 (*Lowell Early College*)



# Improve Academics & Student Achievement at Every School Site



- Tracking important progress in the engagement levels of our students when compared to the same time period of the prior year with districtwide increases in average daily attendance (93% to 95%)
- Reductions in out-of-school suspensions (3,636 to 2,237)
- Shifted the focus of our academic services and completely redesigned our academic programming to include a combination of online, virtual learning, and teacher-directed remote learning based on centrally-designed, grade-appropriate weekly work packets
- LPS distributed over 5,000 chromebooks to families in need in the spring and established drive through “tech tents” to provide outdoor, COVID compliant tech support to families
- Improved the ratio of mobile devices to students from 1:3 in SY19/20 to 1:1 in SY20/21.



# *2020-2021 Organizational Goals and Key Performance Indicators*



## **Improve academics and student achievement at every school site**

- On-Track to Graduation. Credit attainment monitored quarterly through Aspen
- Course Grades. Monitored quarterly through Aspen
- Math and ELA Proficiency. Monitored three times through the IREADY assessment
- Early Literacy. Monitored three times through the Fountas and Pinnell assessment
- Student Discipline. Monitored monthly through Aspen



# Improve Operational Efficiency Across the System



- Appointed the most diverse executive leadership team in recent district history
- Overhauled the school budgeting process to increase equity and transparency in resource allocation through a Fair Student Funding model, a first-of-its-kind redesign for Lowell based on nationwide best practices
- Concerted effort to identify and eliminate race-based employment barriers, resulting in 63% of all central office hires in FY20 identifying as people of color
- Development of a locally-based, teacher recruitment and retention program to increase the number of teachers of color in district schools and cultivate leadership opportunities for current diverse teaching staff (*Diversifying Teacher Leaders Initiative*)
- Engaged in a scenario-based budgeting process that enabled the District to navigate the uncertainty of the state's economic environment, including an unprecedented requirement to plan for month-to-month budgets and the need to account for significant increased costs facing the District, while still maintaining a \$2 million increase in school-based budgets for the next fiscal year



# *2020-2021 Organizational Goals and Key Performance Indicators*



## **Operational Efficiency:**

- Diversity Hiring - Monitored quarterly through internal tracking
- Teacher Attendance - Monitored monthly through Aspen
- Substitute Fill Rate - Monitored daily through AESOP
- In-Person/Virtual Enrollment - Monitored quarterly through Aspen
- PPE Stockpile - Monitored monthly through internal inventory tracking



## Ensure that every school is safe and welcoming to every student and every family, every day



- Security and emergency preparedness of each facility was improved through an internally-developed district-wide school safety audit protocol
- Established a new position of Social-Emotional Learning Coordinator to focus explicitly on the developing and implementing SEL curriculum and training district-wide
- Began process of elevating student voice by setting the foundation for the district's first Student Advisory Council with representation from a diverse, cross-section of secondary students. The *Lowell Student Advisory Council/LSAC*, which will be facilitated centrally, will begin informing district-level decision-making starting in SY20/21
- Established a team of centralized, bilingual family liaisons, with representation from each of the District's high frequency language populations and developed a language access plan which included an expansion of the language line and translation and interpretation services
- To ensure food security for the District's vulnerable populations during the statewide shutdown, we completely redesigned our cafeteria services around grab-and-go meal sites, serving over 500,000 meals to families in need during just the first three months of school closure



# ***2020-2021 Organizational Goals and Key Performance Indicators***



## **Safe and Welcoming Environment:**

- Social Emotional Learning - Monitored three times through the Devereux Students Strengths Assessment
- Student Attendance - Monitored daily through Aspen
- Chronic Absenteeism - Monitored monthly through Aspen
- Facility Safety - Monitored semi-annually through an internal audit protocol
- Meal Distribution - Monitored weekly through internal tracking



## Increase community engagement and empower families as partners in the educational process



- Strategic plan was developed with input that was accumulated through hundreds of stakeholder meetings, including nearly 60 listening sessions with staff, over 40 gatherings with external partners and community representatives, and 100 school visits in the first 100 school days
- Implemented the District's first ever School Site Council summit with over 100 participants, and expanded parental involvement in school-based budgeting with more families than ever before participating in the spring budget process
- Expanded our social media presence, increasing the frequency of new posts to the district's accounts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter from less than 10 per month to more than 50 per month and increasing the number of total followers across platforms by 43% from SY18/19 to SY19/20
- Embarked on a community-led process to strengthen our understanding of each community's expectations, hopes, dreams and definition of "success" for our students, which ultimately will result in a co-created vision for how our public education system can develop the skills, mindsets and competencies of our students through their educational experience (*Portrait of a Graduate*)



## *2020-2021 Organizational Goals*



### **Family and Community Engagement:**

- Community Satisfaction - Monitored semi-annually through an internally designed survey
- Language Access - Monitored semi-annually through an internally designed survey
- School-Site Council Participation - Monitored quarterly through internal tracking
- Parent/Teacher Conference Participation - Monitored semi-annually through internal tracking

# 2020-2021 Organizational Goals and Key Performance Indicators

## Academics and Student Achievement:

1. On-track to graduation monitor progress quarterly towards graduation based on credit attainment
2. Course grades will be monitored quarterly
3. Math and ELA Benchmarks, IREADY, standards-based Math/ELA quarterly assessment that will provide educators with instructional resources designed to improve student success
4. Early Literacy Fountas and Pinnell is system of support that evaluates students reading and comprehension and is administered three times per year
5. Student Discipline monitoring in/out of school suspensions

## Safe and Welcoming Environment:

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2. Student Attendance. Monitored daily through Aspen
3. Chronic Absenteeism. Monitored monthly through Aspen
4. Facility Safety. Monitored semi-annually through an internal audit protocol
5. Meal Distribution. Monitored weekly through internal tracking

## Operational Efficiency:

1. Diversity hiring will be monitored through tracking of the percentage of new hires who identify among diverse populations
2. Teacher attendance rate will be uploaded quarterly to dashboard; this is monitored on a daily basis
3. Substitute fill rate will be uploaded quarterly to dashboard; this is monitored on a daily basis
4. Student enrollment will be reviewed quarterly for seat capacity
5. PPE Stockpile will be uploaded monthly to dashboard; this is monitored on a weekly basis

## Family and Community Engagement:

1. Community Satisfaction. Monitored semi-annually through an internally designed survey
2. Language Access. Monitored semi-annually through an internally designed survey
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4. Parent/Teacher Conference Participation. Monitored semi-annually through internal tracking