

Mansfield Public Schools Equity Audit Report

Prepared for the Mansfield Public Schools
by Mass Insight Education & Research, Inc.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We commend Mansfield Public Schools (MPS) on their commitment to furthering equity and inclusion for all students, families, and staff. This equity audit report is the result of an effort initiated by MPS to understand the ways the district can build upon strengths and align resources to meet the needs of the diverse MPS student body, staff, and community, particularly prioritizing those from marginalized populations. Equity, as defined by MPS, means *everyone getting what they need to fully prosper, and reach their goals and potential in school and in life. Equity recognizes that every individual has unique strengths and needs, which means that different (not same/equal) solutions are necessary for access and opportunity.* Through this externally-conducted equity audit, the district hopes to have a better understanding of the lived experiences of stakeholders and opportunities for creating a more equitable, accessible, and inclusive educational system that supports the success of all MPS stakeholders.

Equity Audit Purpose and Process: Mansfield 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 as 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 document and data review, interviews, focus groups, phone calls, and surveys of students, families, community partners, and school and district staff. An analysis surfaced recommendations for MPS to consider as they move forward to advance equity, access, and inclusivity in the district. The equity audit process started summer 2021 and concluded summer 2022. Strategic planning work will follow the audit through fall 2022.

Equity Audit Findings: Findings resulting from the equity audit are summarized below in alignment with Mass Insight's Equity Audit Framework, consisting of the following nine domains: Vision, Strategy & Culture; Accountability for Equitable Student Access & Outcomes; Governance & Conditions; Focus on Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Teaching & Learning; Student Readiness to Learn; Workforce Development; Family & Community Engagement; Data; School Management. Additional information for each finding is included in the full report. Findings include both strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Note: The first domain–Vision, Strategy & Culture–is foundational and intentionally presented first. Efforts to strengthen this domain should come first because it serves as a compass to approach all other priority areas, as it publicly establishes the district's commitment to equity. For equity to permeate the system, it has to become the individual and collective responsibility and work of everyone in the district, and it has to be reflected in equitable and inclusive policies, practices, and decision making. To do so, it will be essential for Mansfield Public Schools to maintain a deliberate focus on strengthening stakeholder orientation toward equity, and to build from the work they have already begun.

Domain 1: Vision, Strategy & Culture

- Mansfield Public Schools has committed to improving equity and inclusion for all students in their current strategic objectives and three-year Student Opportunity Act Plan. Though, there are not yet clear accountability measures, roles, and systems grounded in a shared vision for equity to ensure everyone is moving in the same direction.
- MPS has outlined a set of district core values focused on honoring and meeting individual student

needs; these values are still being operationalized as the district navigates differing community beliefs about what should be true for all students.

- MPS has made positive and inclusive culture a strategic priority. Stakeholders rate district and school climate/culture as highly safe overall, yet there is still a need to improve positive and inclusive culture, particularly for students who identify as BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and those who have disabilities.

Domain 2: Accountability for Equitable Student Access & Outcomes

- There is not yet a shared community-wide understanding of and investment in the district's work to improve equity and inclusion for all students.
- MPS as a whole has positive performance on standardized tests. However, there is a disparity in the performance of BIPOC students and White students. Performance gaps exist for all student groups except for White students at both the elementary and middle school levels.
- Overall, district suspension and expulsion rates in MPS remain low. However, African-American students, Hispanic/Latinx students, students with disabilities, and high-needs students are disproportionately represented in discipline data.
- There are gaps in student access to and participation in advanced courses for students identified as economically disadvantaged, high needs, English learners, and students with disabilities.
- MPS graduation rates are high overall. However, there are gaps in graduation rates for African-American students and Hispanic students. Students also express a desire for more high school options and support for pursuing alternate post secondary pathways.

Domain 3: Governance & Conditions

- The MPS central office, leadership, and school committee demonstrate an orientation of support and collaboration, and a focus on student success that provides a foundation for coherence across improvement efforts.
- Leaders continue to develop an orientation of equity. They are starting efforts to examine and address inequities, yet policies, practices, and resources can be improved to be fully inclusive and equitable for students and staff.

Domain 4: Focus on Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Teaching & Learning

- The district has provided cultural proficiency training for all faculty and staff. Staff express a need and desire for ongoing and sustained professional development around building cultural proficiency, diversity, equity, and inclusive practices, as well as culturally sustaining teaching and learning.
- There is evidence of attempts to become more inclusive, but the district has not fully embraced and required diversity in the curricular materials and instructional practices.

Domain 5: Student Readiness to Learn

- Student experiences impact their readiness to learn. While many MPS students report high levels of belonging in school, students outside the mainstream demographic have reported negative experiences.
- MPS has invested in social-emotional learning and partnerships to support the whole child's needs. Staff express interest in and a need for additional training and support.
- The district is invested in programs to support students. There is evidence of programming supporting students academically and holistically, which benefits students' readiness to learn.

Domain 6: Workforce 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.
- Multiple stakeholders acknowledge that staff diversity is important for MPS. Current efforts to recruit a more diverse staff are not yet resulting in staff who represent student diversity.

Domain 7: Family & Community Engagement

- Mansfield Public Schools uses a variety of methods to communicate district-wide and school-level

information to community members and families. The District provides support to increase accessibility, however, the effectiveness of communication strategies varies for different populations.

- The District seeks input from family and community members. However, it is unclear the extent to which representative family feedback influences district decision-making.

Domain 8: Data

- The district utilizes data to identify student needs and inform support placements. There is not yet a systematic process to identify and address specific student population needs using disaggregated data.
- The district is developing a practice of using data to establish and progress monitor improvement efforts and strategic priorities.

Domain 9: School Management

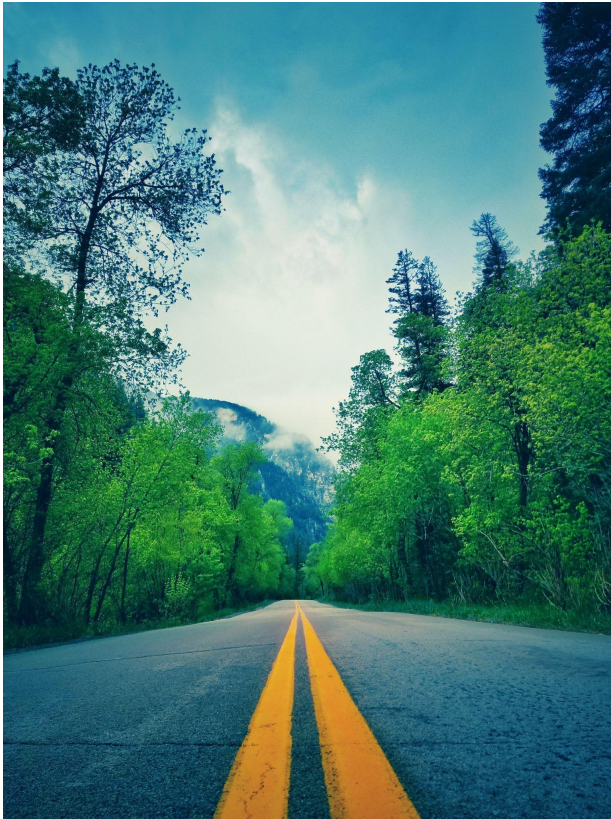
- Decision-making is a collaborative process among MPS leadership. Leaders feel supported by their supervisors and the Superintendent.
- There are mechanisms in place to monitor progress towards school improvement plan implementation and student outcomes, but there are not yet explicit, measurable goals and key performance indicators for tracking outcomes and implementation. In addition, there are not clear data-driven structures for accountability and school improvement.

Recommendations Resulting from the Equity Audit: Recommendations and implementation actions were designed with the district's context in mind, acknowledging staff capacity, resources, existing initiatives, and timelines. Recommendations are not quick fixes but rather parts of a series of intentional actions among stakeholders to recognize access barriers and design solutions to dismantle systems, structures, policies, practices, and mindsets that create and support them. Recommendations are intended to be sequenced and prioritized through the strategic planning process. Mass Insight proposes the following seven recommendations, which are detailed further in the full report:

1. Build a shared understanding of and investment in MPS' vision for equity and establish collective accountability systems and structures to ensure progress towards the desired future state.
2. Provide professional learning/development opportunities and ongoing support for stakeholders to develop their skills and comfort in engaging in courageous conversations about race, diversity, and discrimination.
3. Develop a shared language, approach, and resources for ensuring all students have access to rigorous, culturally responsive and linguistically sustaining classrooms.
4. Develop strategic new approaches to attract, recruit, hire, and retain more diverse and representative staff in all positions.
5. Develop a data management plan, key performance indicators, and practices to create an equity-centered data-informed culture throughout the District.
6. Establish a comprehensive, evidence-based Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) program.
7. Build genuine relationships with families and community partners by establishing alternatives to traditional communication channels. Consider the experiences of marginalized communities and families during district decision-making.

In conclusion, we believe MPS is well-poised to build from strong foundations to continue to understand and address inequities, and create a more inclusive experience for all students, families, and staff in the MPS community. The district has committed to continuing its equity journey and taking a thoughtful approach to planning a pathway forward that acknowledges local context. Recent national and world events, including the COVID-19 pandemic and racial protests and injustices, have brought to light the extent of systemic inequalities and inequities in our country. While many are beyond the scope of school systems to address, educational systems are also wrought with unequal and inequitable structures, policies, and practices. *MPS is poised to chart a new and more equitable, accessible, and inclusive course for the district and its stakeholder communities.*

INTRODUCTION



Equity as a Journey

Mansfield 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 district and school staff, students, families, and community members. Our hope is that this audit will support all Mansfield Public Schools stakeholders to both individually and collectively develop an equity lens and build a strong foundation that enables all to see equity as part of their daily work. By embedding equity into daily practices, the district will further the education landscape and the lived experience of all stakeholders.

Technical adjustments can create some change, but disrupting larger and more systemic equity, inclusivity, and access gaps requires consistent individual and collective focus to address mindsets, behaviors, systems, and structures over time. Enacting sustainable change will require ongoing examinations of how decisions and behaviors impact

the educational experiences of all MPS students, staff, families, and community.

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

Key Definitions

Mansfield Public Schools utilizes a common set of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) terms and definitions to create a shared language and framework for equity-related conversations. To build awareness of Mansfield Public School's common DEI language, the following key terms are provided here to serve as a reference when interpreting this document.

- **Equity** - everyone getting what they need to fully prosper, and reach their goals and potential in school and in life. Equity recognizes that every individual has unique strengths and needs, which means that different (not same/equal) solutions are necessary for access and opportunity.
- **Diversity** - the dimensions and range of difference that exists in groups, including race, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, religion, cognitive style, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, education, marital status, language, ability, veteran status, physical appearance, etc.
- **Inclusion** - the practice of creating nurturing environments in which each individual feels welcomed, respected, supported, safe, and valued as a participating member.

Other terms used within this report not provided by Mansfield Public Schools include:

- **Identity** - a person's sense of self defined by a range of social and physical affiliations and one's personal life experiences, memories, relationships, and values.
- **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).
- **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.
- **English Learner** - a student who does not speak English or whose native language is not English, and who is not currently able to perform ordinary classroom work in English. (DESE, 2022).
- **BIPOC** - an acronym for Black, Indigenous, People of Color.
- **LGBTQIA+** - an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and the countless affirmative ways in which people identify.

Objectives of Equity Audit

During the 2021-2022 school year, Mansfield Public Schools partnered with Mass Insight Education & Research (Mass Insight) to conduct a district equity audit to understand the ways Mansfield Public Schools can build upon current strengths and align conditions to meet the needs of its diverse student body, staff, families, and the greater Mansfield Public Schools 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 Mansfield Public Schools can take to create a more equitable and inclusive district for all stakeholders, specifically to inform a district strategic planning process focused on sequencing and prioritization of initiatives to address inequities. It is not intended to give prescriptive steps to operationalize equity, as that is part of the work and journey that Mansfield Public Schools must internally engage in as a district and community to build the capacity of all stakeholders. This equity audit names the foundational strengths that Mansfield Public Schools 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 for every student, staff member, family member, and member of the Mansfield Public Schools community.

About Mass Insight and Our Commitment to Equity

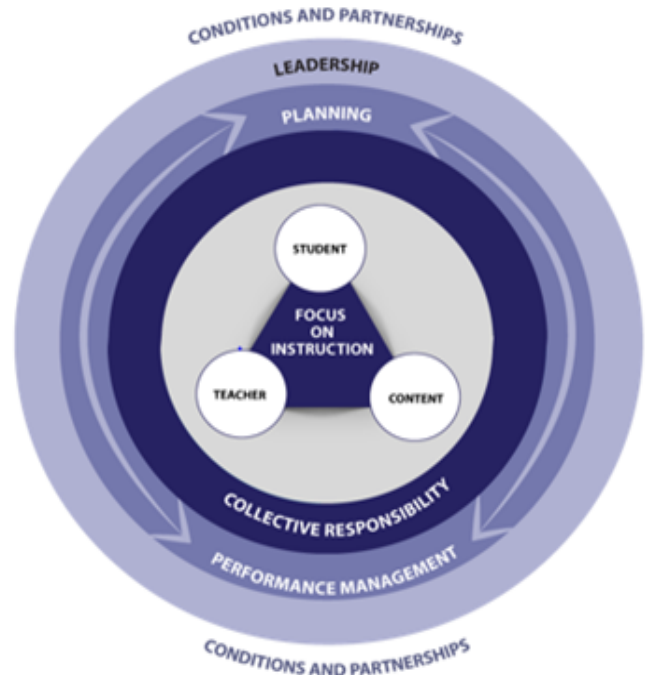
Mass Insight Education & Research is a Boston-based nonprofit that supports schools, districts, and state education agencies nationwide. Our mission is to provide leadership in closing achievement and opportunity gaps for underserved students to drive college and career success by focusing on system

transformation and student academic success. Mass Insight is a recognized leader in school improvement, providing advanced academic programs, research, and strategic consulting services across the United States. 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 systematically 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 systematically 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;
- **Focus on 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. We believe all students should have equitable opportunities and access to a high-quality K-12 education, regardless of zip code, economic status, gender, races, 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. Overcoming this history requires different, tailored, and oftentimes unequal support and resources in order to dismantle inequitable systems and practices and with the goal to increase the diversity, equity, and inclusion orientation at the individual level to mitigate biases and prejudice.

METHODOLOGY

This section describes the framework, timeline, and process utilized to gather qualitative and quantitative documents and data sources that Mass Insight analyzed and gathered during the equity audit process. Creative methods of engagement were collaboratively employed by Mass Insight with Mansfield Public Schools' full support to ensure the equity audit was informed by stakeholder voice and perspectives, which are described in greater detail in this section.

Mass Insight's District Equity Audit Framework

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. Our research-informed [Theory of Action](#) describes in greater detail the various aspects of education systems we believe support the structures, policies, practices, and actions necessary for school leaders and staff in order to develop, implement, and sustain improvements. Our equity audit framework, below, serves as an outline to our process for understanding the current reality and the extent to which equity is experienced by district stakeholders (staff, students, families, partners, and community members).

Mass Insight's district equity audit framework was the lens through which our data and document collection, focus groups, interviews, and surveys were designed, conducted, and analyzed. While priority areas and recommendations do not align one-to-one with framework domains, the recommendations section for each priority area utilizes the framework's highest performing district descriptors to identify equity-focused growth areas for Mansfield Public Schools to consider. Our district equity audit framework consists of the following nine domains (*see Appendix for the full framework descriptors*):

- **Vision, strategy, and culture:** District vision, strategy, culture, and priorities reflect a commitment to educational equity and promote a district-wide culture of inclusiveness and a belief that all students can learn and succeed.
- **Accountability for equitable student access and outcomes:** Policies, systems, and practices enable all students to fully participate in schools, programs, and activities that result in high comparable outcomes.
- **Governance and conditions:** Clear and equitable school committee/board and central office structures, systems, processes, and practices work together to advance the district towards its vision. The district commitment to equity is reflected in governance and central office structures, systems, policies, and practices.
- **Focus on culturally and linguistically sustaining teaching and learning:** Curriculum, materials, instructional practices, and learning environments ensure school leaders, teachers, and other school staff constantly improve and refine rigorous standards-based pedagogy that recognizes and embraces students' identities and the district's diversity.
- **Student readiness to learn:** The district and schools create safe, positive, and inclusive learning environments for all students. Students' non-academic needs are proactively addressed so they fully engage and succeed academically.
- **Workforce development:** Systems and processes attract, recruit, cultivate, hire, and develop new and diverse staff. All staff receive ongoing professional development that results in the retention of a talented, culturally competent, and diverse workforce.
- **Family and community engagement:** The district and schools intentionally and authentically communicate with and successfully engage students, families, and community members.
- **Data:** The district uses data regularly to identify and address inequities in the system. Disaggregated data is accessible and informs decision-making throughout the district.
- **School management:** District policies, structures, and systems enable school leaders to create the school-level conditions that align people, time, program, and money to ensure the success of all students.

Data Sources and Collection Methods

Mass Insight’s equity audit approach focused on a system-wide understanding of equity within Mansfield Public Schools as evidenced by stakeholder experiential data, district and school performance data, and various artifacts. It is worth noting that our use of the word “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 additionally prioritizes 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 how welcoming schools and the district are to families and community stakeholders. We invest substantial time in gathering the representative voices of MPS stakeholders - students, families, community partners, school staff, school leaders, and district staff - throughout the audit process, in both focus groups and surveys.

The audit process gathered data from middle school and high school students in focus groups and surveys. We did not include elementary school students because the majority of them have only experienced one school in Mansfield Public Schools and because of the increased logistical challenges requiring signed parental permission. Our process, however, ensured that families and school staff and leaders of elementary schools were included in all other aspects of the audit, such as focus groups and surveys.

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

Phases of Data Collection and Analysis

The graphic below visually portrays the phases and high-level steps to complete this equity audit. We were able to remain close to the original timelines for project completion despite accommodations made for COVID-19 pandemic complications. All adjustments to the original schedule were collaboratively approved by both Mansfield Public Schools and Mass Insight and were made to ensure the integrity of the process and inclusion of stakeholders. Strategic planning will follow the audit process.



Documents and Relevant District and School Success Measures

An extensive list of documents and data was requested by Mass Insight at the start of the equity audit and was provided by Mansfield Public Schools to the extent available. Additional publicly available information was also part of the data and document review. It should be noted that unless otherwise stated with a footnote, district data was sourced from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for accuracy, availability, and consistency purposes. While extensive documents and data were reviewed, not all are included in the audit or were applicable to the priority areas and recommendations.

Contained in the table below are *examples* of the types of data we examined by domain of our equity audit 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 sources of data over others.

Data document sources:

Equity Audit Domain	Sample Reviewed Data and Documents
Vision, Strategy & Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School and central office climate surveys • District vision, mission & values statements • District strategic improvement plan • State Student Opportunity Act plan
Accountability for Equitable Student Access & Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special education policies and handbook • English language learner policies and handbook • Transportation schedule • Advanced coursework enrollment and success • Multi-tiered systems of supports model
Governance & Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational chart for central office and schools • School committee and subcommittee meeting minutes • Theory of action for district improvement plan • District budget and school budget • Funding allocations for remote learning
Focus on Culturally & Linguistically Teaching and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District-wide assessments & assessment calendar • District vision for instruction • ACCESS data • District approved curricular resources
Student Readiness to Learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District discipline policies and protocols • District attendance policy • Discipline and attendance data • Counseling allocations • Student and family school surveys
Workforce Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District staff demographics and language proficiencies • Staff vacancies • Teacher performance data • Teacher and leader experience data • Collective bargaining agreement • District-wide professional development schedule

Family & Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student enrollment materials and process • Partner list • Family groups
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District guidance on data use • Protocols and schedules for district and school data discussions
School Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School improvement plans • School performance and accountability measures and processes

Surveys

Mass Insight's surveys are an opportunity for stakeholders to share their experiences. Our surveys are designed to be anonymous; no identifying information is collected or utilized that would allow us to connect specific responses to specific Mansfield Public Schools individuals. The exception to anonymity is if a survey respondent included identifying information in the open responses they provided in the survey. Due to the nature of the equity audit, there are survey items for respondents to self-identify race/ethnicity, gender, and marginalized population status at the conclusion of each survey. Respondents are not required to answer any survey item, including the self-identification items, to participate in the equity audit. Mass Insight shares all survey responses with districts after the equity audit is complete because it is important for district leaders, in particular, to read and better understand the extent to which stakeholders view the district as equitable and inclusive. Prior to our sharing the survey responses, however, we meticulously remove all identifying information (names of individuals, staff, or schools) from comments to maintain anonymity. *Please refer to the Appendix for additional information on survey design.*

Efforts to Increase Survey Participation

Surveys were administered between Mansfield Public Schools for six stakeholder groups: district-level staff, school leaders, school-level staff, middle and high school students, families, and community partners. Surveys were administered through the Survey Monkey® platform and were available for students in Mansfield Public Schools. The district provided translated surveys via Fiverr in the following languages for families: Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, French, Vietnamese, Pashto, Urdu, Russian, and Chinese.

As surveys are anonymous and a quick way to gain a broad understanding of stakeholders' perspectives, the district was intentional about its outreach methods to encourage stakeholders to participate. Each survey was open for three weeks for participants to complete. They were distributed to the following groups:

- District and School leadership (*Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, Directors, Principals, Assistant Principals, Directors*)
- District and School staff (*teachers, nurses, paraprofessionals, counselors, support staff, transportation, central office staff*)
- Middle and high school students
- Families: received the survey link via emails from MPS, flyers, and the district website
- Community partners

Survey Participation

Below is the total number of survey participants for each of the six surveys, as well as the percent of participants who chose to indicate that they identify with a marginalized population:

- District and School leadership: 24 responses, 20.8% of whom self-identify with a marginalized population and 20.8% of whom preferred not to answer
- District and School staff: 421 responses, 26.5% of whom self-identify with a marginalized population and 19.1% of whom preferred not to answer

- Students: 1,266 responses, 23.5% of whom self-identify with a marginalized population and 5.5% of whom preferred not to answer
- Families: 207 responses, 31.5% of whom self-identify with a marginalized population and 19.5% of whom preferred not to answer
 - 202 English survey responses
 - 1 Spanish survey responses
 - 2 Portuguese survey responses
 - 2 Arabic survey responses
- Community Partners: 4 responses

Note: families had access to all survey links and self-selected the survey in their preferred language. Also note that participants could select either that they do identify with a marginalized population (which was described in the survey), that they do not identify with a marginalized population, or that they preferred not to answer that survey item.

Interviews and Focus Groups

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 and interview process began with a description of our confidentiality and anonymity protections to ensure stakeholder trust so they feel as comfortable as possible sharing their personal experiences. We offered both general focus groups and interviews, as well as affinity focus groups. ***All members of the school community were invited to join any of the focus groups that they chose. We did not make assumptions about how individuals identified or elected to engage, and we did not require individuals to join an affinity group.*** Our goal was to create a variety of safe spaces for all participants. Notes from focus groups and interviews will neither be shared with anyone in Mansfield 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 sign up to participate and are asked a few questions at the beginning of a focus group and interview so their responses can be compared to those of other stakeholders. The identities of focus group participants remain anonymous outside of Mass Insight.

Stakeholders were notified in the following ways about participating in focus groups and interviews and all took place between the end of March and early May:

- District-level staff: Mass Insight requested focus groups and interviews with various district office staff.
- School leaders: Mass Insight requested principal and assistant principal focus groups. Note that school leader focus groups were representative of school leaders, as it was not feasible to speak with all of them.
- School-level staff: Mass Insight requested staff focus groups.

The following representatives were requested from each school at each school level:

- Preschool and elementary schools: a PK-2 teacher, a 3-5 teacher, a paraprofessional, up to two staff who self-identify as Black, Indigneous, or a person of color (BIPOC) or self-identify with the LGBTQIA+ community, an English language development teacher (ELD), and a special education (SPED) teacher.
- Middle schools: three teachers, one paraprofessional, up to two staff who self-identify as BIPOC or self-identify with the LGBTQIA+ community, an ELD teacher, a SPED teacher, one academic counselor, and one adjustment counselor.

- High schools: five teachers, a paraprofessional, up to two staff who self-identify as BIPOC or self-identify with the LGBTQIA+ community, an ELD teacher, a SPED teacher, up to two academic counselors, and up to two adjustment counselors.
- Middle and high school students: Mass Insight requested student focus groups, all of which were contacted by MPS staff and scheduled with Mass Insight. School leaders and teachers shared with students about the opportunity to participate in focus groups. The following representatives were requested from each school at each school level:
 - Middle schools: Students in the mainstream population, students who identify as BIPOC or self-identify with the LGBTQIA+ community, EL students, Students with IEPs and/or 504 Plans, and Faith-based students.
 - High schools: Students in the mainstream population, students who identify as BIPOC or self-identify with the LGBTQIA+ community, EL students, Students with IEPs and/or 504 Plans, and Faith-based students.
- Families: Along with survey links, families received the Google Forms links to participate in focus groups and to sign up their students for a focus group via emails from MPS, flyers, and the district website.
- Community partners: District leadership informed community partners of the opportunity to participate in a survey, as well as to sign up for a focus group at the end of the survey.

Note that most focus groups and interviews were conducted by at least two Mass Insight staff, there was a small number of instances where focus groups and interviews were conducted by one Mass Insight staff member.

As with surveys, focus groups and interviews took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of the Equity Audit, in person school had resumed, but to ensure safety and minimize risk of exposure for MPS stakeholders from external parties, all focus and interviews were conducted via Zoom.

Interview and Focus Group Design and Participation Rates

All focus group and interview 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 understand the extent to which systems, structures, policies, and practices within Mansfield Public School 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 following table provides additional information about focus group participants:

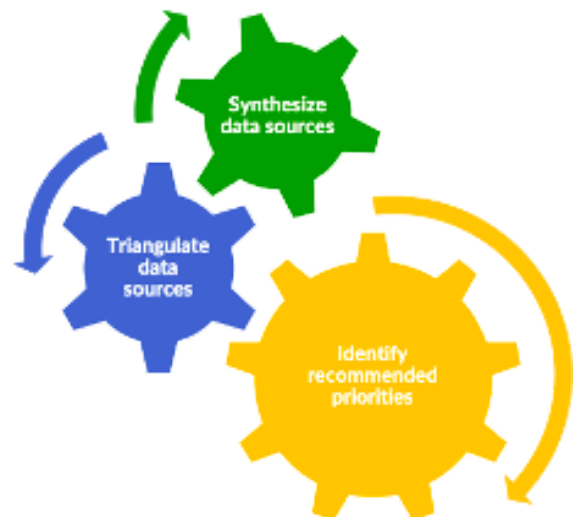
Stakeholder Group	Examples of Participants	Total Individual Participants
District-level staff	<p>Interviews with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Superintendent ● Directors ● School Committee Member (1) <p>Focus groups with department representatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assistant Superintendents ● Directors ● Assistant Directors ● Supervisors ● SPED Director 	27

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Committee • Health & Food Service group • Athletics & Performing Arts group • Office Staff 	
School leaders	<p>Interviews with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directors <p>Focus groups with representatives in the roles of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary, Middle, and High School Principals • Elementary, Middle, and High School Assistant Principals 	11
School-level staff	<p>Interviews with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directors • Teachers • Support staff <p>Focus groups with representatives in the roles of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student support staff • Teachers • Paraprofessionals 	55
Staff affinity groups	<p>Focus groups with staff who self identify as representatives of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIPOC • LGBTQIA+ community • Staff with disabilities 	11
Students	<p>Focus groups with representatives from all MPS middle and high schools who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle school students • High school students • Evening School students 	8
Student affinity groups	<p>Interviews with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who self-identify with an affinity group <p>Focus groups with students who self identify as representatives of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIPOC • LGBTQIA+ community • Students with disabilities/504 Plans • EL Students • Faith-based students 	11
Families/ caregivers	<p>Interviews with families/caregivers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle school students • High school students <p>Focus groups with families/caregivers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle school students • High school students 	9

Families/ caregivers of students in affinity groups	Interviews with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families/caregivers of students who self-identify with an affinity group Focus groups with parents of students who self-identify as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BIPOC Students with disabilities LGBTQIA+ community Faith-based EL (<i>no families/caregivers opted into this affinity group</i>) 	5
Community partners	There were no sign-ups for Community Partner Focus Groups or Interviews	0

Data Analysis

Throughout the equity audit process, Mass Insight synthesizes data to surface commonalities, as well as discrepancies, among data sources to test developing hypotheses. Qualitative and quantitative data are both informative to understand the extent to which stakeholders are impacted by equitable systems, structures, policies, practices, and behaviors. Data sources (as described in the previous section) include survey responses; focus group and interview comments; quantitative data; and documents. The approach of collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing multiple data sources allows us to organize findings and determine emerging themes that form the foundation of our priority areas.



Some data collected required additional steps to analyze. First, open responses to family surveys in other languages were translated to English by certified multilingual translators. These survey responses were then analyzed separately to understand if there were differences among responses of varied preferred language. The same open response items were also analyzed together—combined English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Arabic—for overall trends and themes.

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

Throughout the data collection and stakeholder engagement phases, we analyze each piece of evidence separately. Once we begin the analysis and report of findings phase, we cross-synthesize or triangulate data sources for each domain of the equity audit framework, again noting common themes and discrepancies that emerge in the findings that also inform recommendations. The triangulation process

also includes comparing the foundational strengths, findings, and proposed recommendations against our highest-performing district descriptor in our equity framework (see *Appendix, pg. 97*); thus removing potential biases from the process as we prioritize recommendations aligned to research-supported best practices of equitable and inclusive school systems.

The process of identifying recommendations is a process that includes all Mass Insight staff who were involved in any part of the equity audit process: engagement managers, consultants, and analysts. This cross-experiential process allows staff 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. Once priority areas are identified, we write the findings sections, which result from the triangulation process. After writing the finding sections, we identify gaps or areas of need when comparing findings to our highest-performing district descriptors, and then create aligned recommendations. The recommendations sections are written to clearly indicate next steps that the district can take to increase equity, access, and inclusivity for all stakeholders.

MANSFIELD BY THE NUMBERS

The following is a brief snapshot of Mansfield Public Schools data compiled by Mass Insight from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education at <https://www.doe.mass.edu/>. Please note that the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic impacted the availability of specific data, as such, the 2019 accountability data is presented below. Demographic data is collected for the 2021- 2022 school year, and academic data is from the 2018-2019 school year.

District Snapshot

MPS School Community

5 Schools:

- Roland Green Pre-School
- Robinson Elementary School
- Jordan/Jackson Elementary School
- Qualters Middle School
- Mansfield High School

2021 Total Student Enrollment: 3,504

2021 Academic Opportunities

71% of 11th and 12th graders that took an advanced course, completed the course.

18.5% ELA Course

57% Math Course

86% of students participated in an arts course

Budget per Pupil

2020 expenditure \$17,726.19

2019 expenditure \$17,271.16

2018 expenditure \$16,588.06

2021 Staffing Data

286.0 Teacher FTE

Student/Teacher Ratio 11.8: 1

100% Licensed Teachers

89.1% Experienced Teachers

2019 District Accountability Classification

Not requiring assistance or intervention (~85%)

Requiring assistance or intervention (~15%)

Meeting or exceeding targets

Substantial progress toward targets

Moderate progress toward targets

Limited or no progress toward targets

Focused/targeted support

Broad/comprehensive support

Cumulative criterion reference target percentage 75 - 100

Cumulative criterion reference target percentage 50 - 74

Cumulative criterion reference target percentage 75 - 100

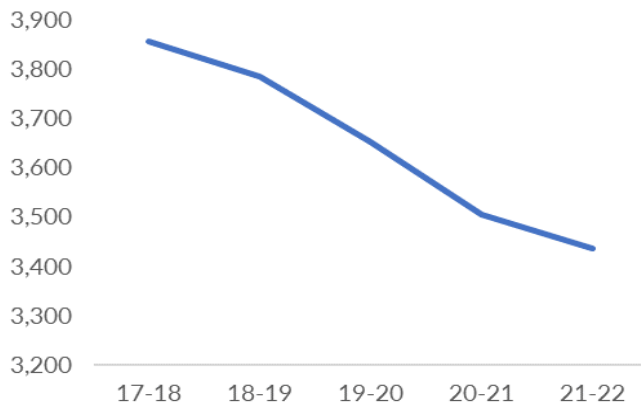
Cumulative criterion reference target percentage 75 - 100

Low graduation rate
Low participation

Underperforming districts
Chronically underperforming districts

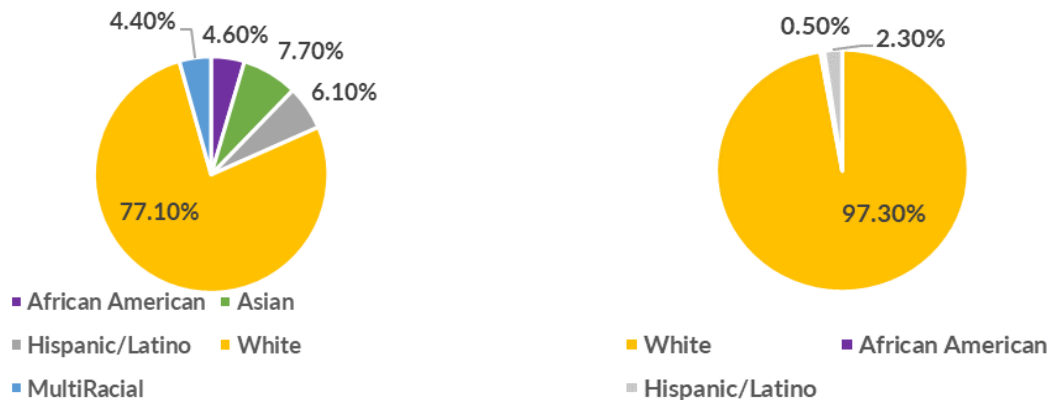
Enrollment Snapshot

2017 - 2022 Student Enrollment

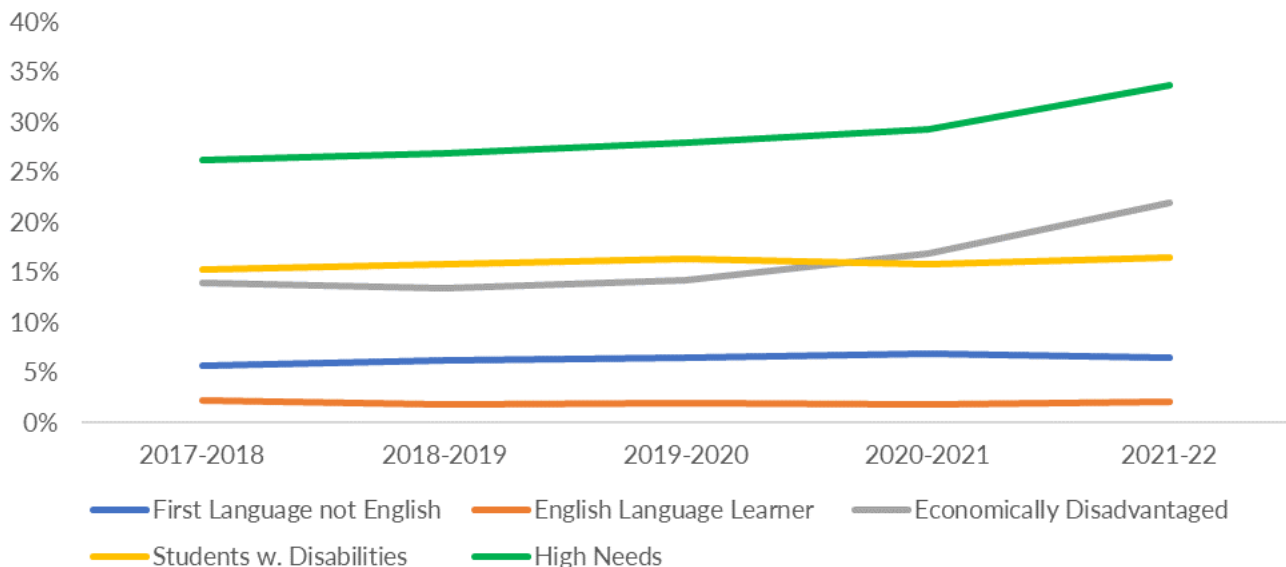


Mansfield Public Schools has a student population with varying needs. Overall, MPS has a large majority of White students (77.1%) and teachers (97.3%). Though, the student population is diverse with representation from more racial groups. Regarding special populations, MPS' population of students with high needs and economically disadvantaged students has increased since 2020.

2021 - 2022 Student Enrollment and Teacher Demographics by Race/Ethnicity



2017 - 2022 Student Enrollment by Special Populations



EQUITY AUDIT FINDINGS

This section of the report details the key equity audit findings. The recommendations are provided in a separate section of the document following the discussion of findings.

About the Equity Audit Findings

Findings represent the most prevalent and significant themes and takeaways that surfaced across multiple sources of evidence (e.g., data, surveys, focus groups, artifacts) and across multiple perspectives (e.g., students, families, staff, etc.). Findings include strengths to build from and opportunities for improvement.

- **Current strengths** describe areas of momentum, as well as key investments and initiatives that the district has already started or established that focuses on equity, access, and opportunities for all students, staff and/or families.
- **Areas for improvement** highlight areas of challenge and/or areas where the district and schools have more work to do to develop or implement equitable practices, policies, or structures that demonstrate a focus on equity, access, and opportunity for all students, staff and/or families.

Key findings are provided for each of the nine Mass Insight Equity Domains, inclusive of strengths and opportunities for improvement. For each finding, the report provides a summary of evidence in paragraph and graphic form, and references data gathered in artifacts, district data, surveys, and focus groups. Please note:

- All quotes and individual survey responses are kept anonymous for confidentiality purposes.
- The Mass Insight team is intentional in drawing input from a variety of individuals, focus groups, and survey responses. Our report aims to reflect a range of perspectives, and to note areas of commonality and difference.

DOMAIN 1: VISION, STRATEGY & CULTURE

Vision, Strategy, and Culture: District vision, strategy, culture, and priorities reflect a commitment to educational equity and promote a district-wide culture of inclusiveness and a belief that all students can learn and succeed.

Mansfield Public Schools has committed to improving equity and inclusion for all students in their current strategic objectives and three-year Student Opportunity Act Plan¹. Though, there are not yet clear accountability measures, roles, and systems grounded in a shared vision for equity to ensure everyone is moving in the same direction.

Mansfield Public Schools' District/School Strategic Improvement Plan (SIP), and Student Opportunity Act (SOA) plan, reflect a commitment to improving equity and inclusion. The MPS website states, "Our vision of the ideal school is one in which all students are actively and intellectually engaged in their learning as a result of the instructional practices that are personalized, differentiated, innovative, and designed to challenge their thinking and understanding. The result of our collective efforts is for all students to achieve their personal best and become meaningful contributors to our society." While a distinct mission statement describing the district's purpose and role in achieving the vision is not published, the district outlines four strategic objectives for achieving its vision in its current strategic/ improvement plan:

- **Teaching and Learning:** Mansfield Public Schools will raise the floor with the right supports and advance higher level learning.
- **Equitable and Inclusive Practices:** Mansfield Public Schools will develop a positive school climate and create opportunities to make our schools more personalized and inclusive.
- **Social, Emotional, Physical Supports:** Mansfield Public Schools will proactively provide for the evolving social, emotional, and physical needs of students.
- **Collaborate to Innovate:** Mansfield Public Schools will identify and cultivate innovative learning environments and pathways.



The District/School SIP includes district and school-specific initiatives, context, actions, and activities to bring each objective to life. The plan also includes a list of pandemic supports and innovations that district stakeholders believe were successful in ensuring safety and meeting the needs of the community during the challenges of the pandemic.

¹ "As part of the SOA, districts are required to submit three-year, evidence-based plans aimed at closing persistent disparities in achievement among student subgroups." Office of the Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, <https://www.doe.mass.edu/commissioner/spec-advisories/soa.html> (2021).

The district's commitment to equity is further evident in the three-year SOA plan. The SOA plan names four commitments that explicitly prioritize a focus on closing gaps for students and meeting the differing needs of multiple student groups.

- Commitment 1 is Focusing on Student Subgroups. According to the plan and based on a review of data, student subgroups requiring focused support to ensure all students achieve at high levels in school and are successfully prepared for life include: English learners and former English learners; Students with disabilities; Low income/economically disadvantaged students; High Needs students (defined as any student who is economically disadvantaged, has a disability, or is an English learner/former English learner); and African American/Black students.
- Commitment 2 is Using Evidence-Based Programs to Close Gaps, including community partnerships for enrichment and wraparound support; strategies for learning acceleration; support for educators to implement high-quality, aligned curriculum; dedicated extended learning support for ELs; and providing food to economically disadvantaged students.
- Commitment 3 is Monitoring Success with Outcome Metrics and Targets. MPS listed a number of outcome metrics used to measure progress in closing gaps, such as MCAS scores, student growth percentile, English language proficiency, and chronic absenteeism.
- Commitment 4 is Engaging All Families to ensure "all families, particularly those representing identified student subgroups most in need of support, have access to meaningful engagement regarding their students' needs."

District and school leaders describe these plans as a starting place for improvement and a way to ensure that school improvement efforts align with district priorities. Leaders share:

- *"We are just getting rolling on our three-year plan; we are in the process of moving forward with all of this; we are in the process of putting data in the hands of teachers that will help with inclusion."*
- *"We are working on our student opportunity act. We are working to build the capacity of our school leaders; we meet with them weekly to do our plan."*
- *"We are a work in progress. Some things are understood, but we need to say them. We need that. It is on our website, and this is part of the work to get us to that."*
- *"I was looking at the district vision, and it is all about differentiating and innovating. I think we have the hope, but it isn't quite working. We want to do it, but how?"*
- *"McLean partnership came out of the Student Opp Act; ELs are in here as well. This is front and center too. I give props to administration because they are focused on student subgroups - we've added staffing too. Admin is putting pieces in place, but it is slow going."*
- *"I think that for me, the past 2 years have been so focused on Covid that we don't have the bandwidth to move forward. Some things have taken a back seat. We tried to be intentional about things around economic disadvantage. To be sure that we are raising questions around courses, supplies, budget-supported 1:1 initiative, and Chromebooks. We focused on some way to get wifi access, hotspots, and families who didn't have access. Easier to have these conversations [economically disadvantaged] in terms of equity."*

While there are documented plans and initiatives, MPS has not yet defined a shared vision, measurable goals, or clear accountability systems for improving equity. Staff and leaders express a need and desire for one clear and coherent vision, plan, and set of goals for equity to ensure district leaders hold themselves and others accountable to meaningful change and improvement. A vision for equity is a key beginning component of ensuring that all students are able to participate in schools, programs, and activities that result in high comparable outcomes. Mansfield Public Schools posted a vision for their schools and district on the website, but there is no vision that solely and specifically speaks to the practice of equity for all parties in the school district. Although other policies are present in the Mansfield Public School District, a policy and shared vision for equity was not found. Having a vision for equity helps to guide policy development, establishment, and adherence.

Additionally, while the SOA plan does include an examination of disaggregated data and a set of outcome metrics for understanding student gaps, the district has not yet defined and published measurable goals, outcomes, and key performance indicators to understand plan progress and improvement towards a more equitable state. The strategic improvement plan focuses on activities, inputs, and implementation milestones, which are important components of any improvement plan that should be paired with specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound goals and key performance indicators for improving equity and inclusion. There is an opportunity to align district efforts around a clear vision and for equity and hold everyone accountable for the success of all students. Staff and leaders share:

- *"Is anything really going to happen after this? My hope is that when the district gets feedback that it turns into an action plan or roadmap for change."*
- *"In my X years, there have been so many topics. They are all worth more time. I would like to feel like there is a unified plan... I hope we have one clear vision."*
- *"I do not think that we have one [a vision for equity]. We have lofty goals to make people feel included and welcomed. School committee members said that we want to show that we are intentional about the work through this process. What does the data show? We have a vision that is sitting at a level."*
- *"I don't know the district's goal for equity because we don't talk about it enough. I don't think we do enough to be proactively inclusive."*
- *"There is the idea that we try to be equitable, but we fit kids into what we already have instead of trying to figure out what kids actually need. I don't know what the plan is. We react instead of having a clear plan in place for how to support people in situations."*
- *"I don't think there is a clear mission in terms of equity. I don't see it in action."*
- *"MPS doesn't have a clear vision. I have never been asked until the survey... Collectively, I do not know what our vision is... We get things going and do not devote the space. We go to the next thing. I want to know the vision and have everyone be a part of the conversation."*

District and school leaders have not yet formally defined roles and responsibilities for leaders at different levels to ensure continued and collective movement towards MPS's vision and priorities for improving equity and inclusion. Staff share that there is a need for leading DEI work from the top and for sustained accountability and commitment to the work. Many suggested appointing a leadership position specifically dedicated to leading coherence and systemwide equity and inclusion work, especially as leadership and staff continue to develop cultural competencies and practices. Staff shared:

- *"My daughter attends a school where they hired a DEI person, and I am impressed with the results. I would like to see one here."*
- *"It is a cultural problem that has to be looked at continuously over time. Initiatives are not brought up into upper administration to be a focus. Equity and inclusion starts there. We need a person in charge of equity and inclusion to make sure the conversations happening are district initiatives and not left up to each building."*
- *"I think that when we do things from within, there are no results and follow-up with a number of things. We are always on to the next thing."*
- *"Efforts often feel inauthentic or like an afterthought (reaction to an event or upcoming survey). There could/should also be more of an attempt to include the general community in the efforts, as the world outside of our walls has a way of affecting what happens within them."*
- *"I wonder if a DEI coordinator in the district would be beneficial."*
- *"I would like to be able to have much larger instruction around why this is such an important issue for all departments. They need to change the idea that all students' identities are in every class and so I would love for there to be more targeted conversations for all staff- why this is important for their students and classes. They need to know how to apply the learning. I feel that people at the top think that we are doing really well. I don't know if they really believe that. It is not good. I hope that the message is sent to administrators and the central office. This is a problem that really needs to be addressed."*
- *"Leadership is key. We do not have it. We do so many surveys. There was no confidence in our principal or*

superintendent. I asked questions, and I got no answers. Very dismissive. I have been on so many committees, and then it was silent. After you do that, you realize that we are just doing this. I want this to be public. We are in fear when a parent speaks up loudly."

MPS has outlined a set of district core values focused on honoring and meeting individual student needs; these values are still being operationalized as the district navigates differing community beliefs about what should be true for all students.

Defined district core values reflect an acknowledgment of the ways in which student assets and needs differ and a desire to differentiate and innovate to meet the needs of the whole child. For example, core values include "All students can be successful lifelong learners; Students come from a variety of backgrounds and bring diverse experiences into our schools; and Education contributes to the emotional, physical, social, and academic development of a student."

Many family members express appreciation that their child(ren)'s individuality is recognized. One family member shared that school staff *"do know my son and his uniqueness and enjoy it. I have noticed that they are very available. I don't know how they do it. They are very responsive and insightful. They already kind of knew in advance when there may be an issue coming up."* Another family member shared, *"What I have started to see this past year is teachers' awareness level. They try to re-engage them [children] on a human level."* Another family member described seeing equity as connected to meeting each student's individual needs: *"Equity means the ability for everyone to have what is needed for them, not only baseline education, but whatever capacity they need, socially emotionally or academically; Everyone has exactly what they need for the level they need, everyone is afforded the same opportunities, and if they are not there, they are given the resources to get there and there are varying degrees of help. In my experience, it's been there from the teacher, who is very communicative about what's going on."*

Many staff describe the importance of seeing students as individuals with diverse backgrounds, identities, strengths, and needs in alignment with the district's core values. Staff and leaders shared:

- *"I agree we have teachers who are so dedicated and really care about the students and staff... Everything we provide, we are a great group. We help each other out. It's a team effort, and we are team players. We want kids to succeed in the least restrictive environment."*
- *"Each student is looked at as having their own uniqueness. This is what I believe. I do know from working with the administration at the HS level or SPED that the individual student here is paramount. They try to make decisions by what is best for our students. We try to support our staff to allow that to happen."*
- *"Staff does a good job of discussing how fairness doesn't always mean it's the same for each person, we have to account for individual differences, the staff, in general, does a good job of telling them that everyone one is on a slightly different path. Things may not always look the same, but we are all working together to reach a common goal."*

The district's core values are not yet embodied districtwide. Stakeholders report that staff and the community at large do not always share a willingness to recognize the ways in which individual identity markers (e.g., race, language, ability/disability, gender, etc.) can impact and contribute to unique and differing individual experiences. Focus group and survey comments reveal a tendency to conflate the ideal state of inclusion and/or personal positive experiences regardless of identity markers with the lived experience of others. Comments often reflect a misconception that because an individual and/or their child or family has not experienced differing treatment because of aspects of identity or difference, the same is or should be true for all others. As a result, the thought of discussing individual or shared identities during the audit process was met with uncertainty and even resistance from a number of audit participants. Some stakeholders acknowledge this resistance to valuing diversity, discussing individuality

and identity, and differentiating for specific needs and experiences outside of the mainstream culture. Staff report that some colleagues believe that anything other than equal treatment is unfair, including the provision of accommodations, which are protected by federal, state, and local law.

- *"I would like to see a stronger recognition on the part of our community that we are a diverse community, and as time goes by, we get more diverse."*
- *"Equity to me is all children get what they need, and it might not look the same for everyone. All students have access to safe classrooms where their voices are heard, where the curriculum matches their background, and where the services they receive are what they need... We hear a lot that it is not fair that this child is getting this in a classroom, and it isn't fair to others."*
- *"They are doing better with teaching with quality. Everyone, no matter their race, religion, or gender, is included. Everyone is the same."*
- *"What we see is that paradigm shift - all kids who walk in the door belong to all of us; sometimes educators work in silos (my kids). We need to loosen our collar and get a little less formal. Let them know that we are there for them."*
- *"I think our process is the same. We don't look at serving one group over another. We service everybody the same; a student is a student is a student. There has not been anything that has made us look at gender or race or anything."*
- *"It is frustrating. We hear from colleagues that it isn't fair if one kid gets an accommodation, but you have to look at the whole child - cognitively, emotionally, and academically. Equity is when each child gets what they need for a free and public education. SPED students need that. Also means support for LGBTQ population."*

51% of students agree that all teachers and staff at their school believe all students can succeed. More middle school students agree than high school students.

Some stakeholders report there is varied belief in all students' ability to succeed. In particular, students named inconsistencies in experiencing high expectations from their teachers. While many report positive experiences in schools, quantitative survey results indicate that only about half of students believe all teachers and staff at their school believe all students can succeed. Additionally, more middle school students agree than high school students agree, with levels of full agreement dropping from 57% of students in grade 7 to 28% of students in grade 12. Student comments reflecting these inconsistencies include:

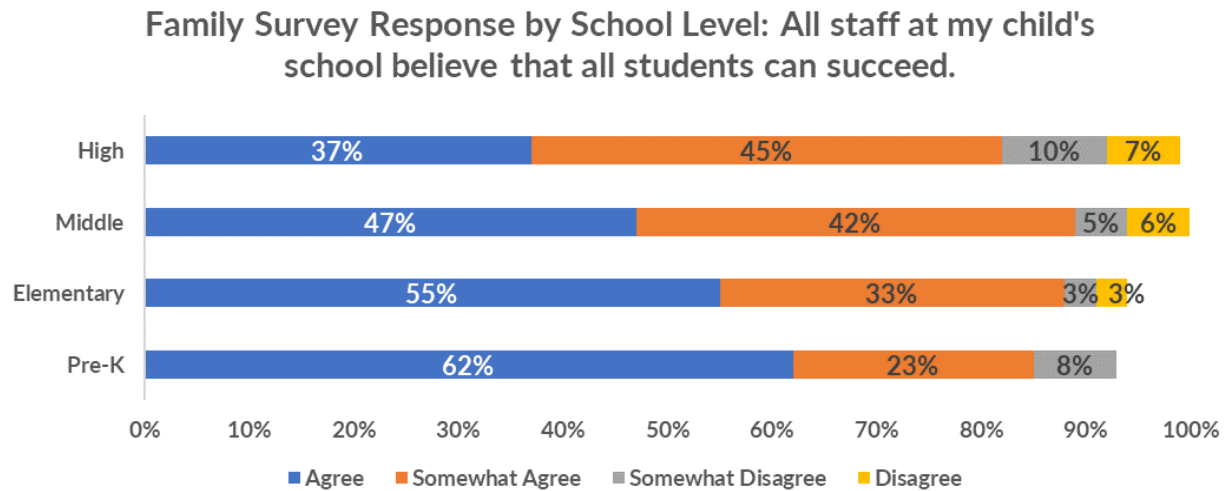
- *"In my classes, I feel a slight distance from my teachers. I feel as if they care but not as if they always want me to do my best."*
- *"Academics are okay, I guess, but some teachers here are lowkey condescending and make it hard to open up to them, even about academic problems. Some teachers are amazing, though, and I trust them with my life."*
- *"I feel like it is just a place to go and learn, not really a place to strive."*

Many family members shared similar perspectives and reported that there is still a need for equity, inclusion, and high expectations for every child to become part of the culture in MPS. Family survey responses indicate that while there is overall agreement that staff believes students can succeed, levels of full agreement range between 37% - 62%, decreasing by school level. Family comments include:

- *"So in terms of my experience with MPS, I don't feel that the district leadership understands what equity truly is. I believe that areas of disability (b/c law requires them to try to do some equity work), but I do not see DEI embedded in the curriculum, school, and administration. It's not a part of the culture..."*
- *"I feel that they [MPS leaders and staff] set high expectations for some students and not others, but overall they set expectations, but there is not [an] effort to develop the children to meet expectations or exceed expectations."*

- “I hope they [MPS] get a better understanding of the issues that are going on. They think everything is going ok. They gloss it over and say, “Hey, that’s just Massachusetts, which is segregated. If you want fairness, I don’t know where the middle ground is.”

Figure A: Family response by school level



Many staff and leaders also share varied perspectives on the extent to which they believe all staff share a belief in all students.

- “[We] find ourselves in arguments with special education and general education teachers that all special education kids have a right to general education, and we have a long way to go. We have to overcome the belief by general educators that that kid doesn’t belong in my class, we have this bar, working with parents and children to reach to get to the next level.”
- “Some teachers are very quick to move on and not take vested interest and holistic approach in supporting students. Dealing with kids on a human and compassionate level - rather than punitive. We have disproportionate discipline in the sense that SPED have longer suspensions.”
- “They use cultural differences to explain why communication is not working. They are on a voucher. They are low-income. Because the majority can afford a prom ticket, everyone can afford it. A lot of assumptions are based on the large majority of students.”
- “I hear, “oh they must be this type of kid because they live in this area or this side of town. These kids just have one mom at home so it is too many kids.” They don't know what is going on and need to stop assuming.”

MPS has made positive and inclusive culture a strategic priority, and stakeholders rate district and school climate/culture as highly safe overall. Yet, there is still a need to improve positive and inclusive culture, particularly for students and staff who identify as BIPOC, as LGBTQIA+, and those who have disabilities who do not feel fully safe and welcome.

MPS strategic priorities for the 2021-2022 school year include that “Mansfield Public Schools will develop a positive school climate and create opportunities to make our schools more personalized and inclusive” and “Mansfield Public Schools will proactively provide for the evolving social, emotional, and physical needs of students.” As a result, MPS has initiated efforts to reach those goals, including investing in cultural proficiency professional development training, providing student groups and clubs, conducting culture and climate surveys, and reviewing curriculum and technology to ensure access and representation.

Stakeholders generally feel welcome in MPS and that district and school climate/culture is safe. The equity audit survey asked stakeholders to indicate the extent to which they believe their district and/or school climate and culture is Inclusive, Welcoming, Positive, Accepting, and Safe. Response options for each characteristic included extremely, mostly, somewhat, or not at all. Across the board, stakeholders rated safety among the highest district characteristics. Positivity and inclusivity tended to rank lower for adults' responses of "extremely," though when added to responses of "mostly," over 70% of all staff, leadership, and families characterized their district and/or school climate/culture as extremely or mostly inclusive, welcoming, positive, accepting, and safe. Over 86% of student survey respondents selected the categories of "extremely" or "mostly" for all characteristics covered here (Included, Welcome, Accepted, and Safe). More detailed results are in the tables below.

Additionally, in response to the survey prompt, "Given my individual identity (including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, culture, immigration status, and ability), I feel comfortable being my authentic self in the district," 82% of staff agree, 14% somewhat agree, 2% somewhat disagree, and 1% disagree. Leadership survey results indicate that 88% of leaders agree, and 12% somewhat agree with the statement.

Table A: Staff and Leadership data

Among staff survey respondents:	Among leadership survey respondents:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 80% of staff survey respondents selected the categories of "extremely" or "mostly" for all characteristics covered here (<i>Inclusive, Welcoming, Positive, Accepting, Safe</i>). Safety ranked highest - 58% of staff believe the district climate culture is extremely safe, and another 38% believe it is mostly safe. Positivity ranked lowest, but still high overall - 44% of staff believe district climate culture is extremely positive, and another 39% believe it is mostly positive. School staff rate their school's climate and culture lower than the overall district climate culture on all characteristics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 70% of leadership survey respondents selected the categories of "extremely" or "mostly" for all characteristics covered here (<i>Inclusive, Welcoming, Positive, Accepting, Safe</i>). Safety ranked highest - 50% of leadership believe the district climate/culture is extremely safe, and another 42% believe it is mostly safe. Inclusivity ranked lowest - Only 13% of leadership believe the district is extremely inclusive, while 58% believe it is mostly inclusive, and 29% believe it is somewhat inclusive. Positivity, Accepting, and Welcoming ranked in the middle - 17% of leadership believe the district is extremely positive, and another 75% believe it is mostly positive. 37% of leadership believe the district is extremely accepting, 42% said mostly, and 21% said somewhat. 42% of leadership believe the district is extremely welcoming, 42% said mostly, and 21% said somewhat.

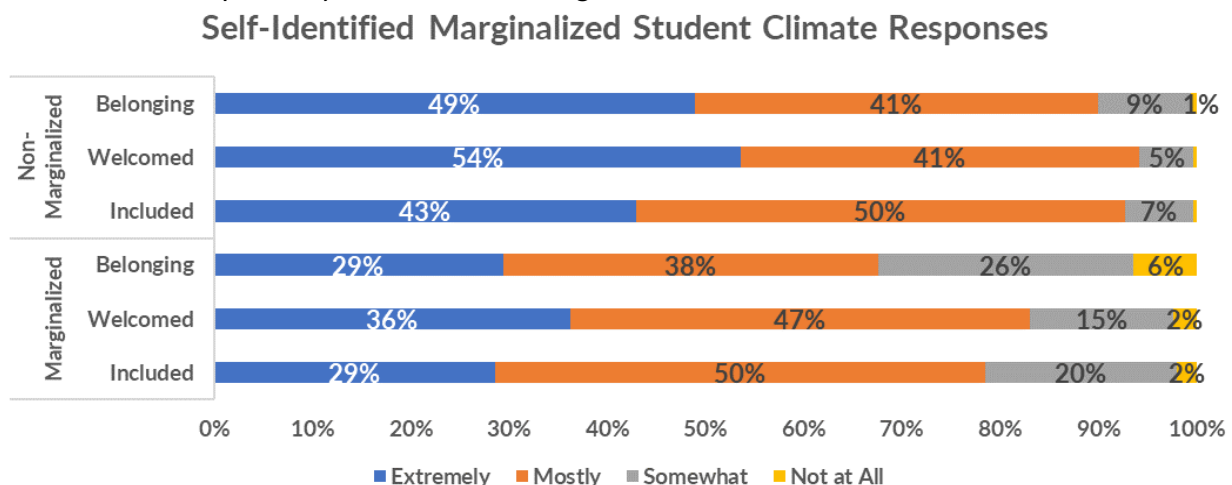
Families and students received different versions of these questions. Students were asked to indicate the extent to which they feel "Included, Welcome, Accepted, and Safe." Families were asked to indicate the extent to which they believe that their child or children feel "Included, Welcome, Accepted, and Safe" and the extent to which they as family members personally feel "Included, Welcome, and Accepted."

Table B: Student and family data

Among student survey respondents:	Among family survey respondents:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 86% of student survey respondents selected the categories of “extremely” or “mostly” for all characteristics covered here (<i>Included, Welcome, Accepted, Safe</i>). Safety ranked highest for responses of “extremely,” but lowest overall - 50% of student respondents feel extremely safe, and another 36% feel mostly safe. 14% of students indicated they feel somewhat or not at all safe. Welcome and acceptance ranked high in total - 47% of student respondents feel extremely welcome, and another 42% feel mostly welcome. 46% of student respondents feel extremely accepted, and another 42% feel mostly accepted. Inclusion ranked lowest for responses of “extremely” - 37% of student respondents feel extremely included, and another 50% feel mostly included. 14% of students indicated they feel somewhat or not at all included. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 74% of family survey respondents selected the categories of “extremely” or “mostly” for all characteristics when asked about the experience of their children, and over 75% when asked about their own experience for all characteristics covered here (<i>Included, Welcome, Accepted, Safe</i>). Safety ranked highest - 51% of family respondents believe their child(ren) feels extremely safe, and another 36% believe their child(ren) feels mostly safe. Welcome ranked second to safety - 49% of family respondents believe their child(ren) feels extremely welcome, and another 34% believe their child(ren) feels mostly welcome. When asked about their own experience, 42% of families feel extremely welcome, and another 41% feel mostly welcome. Inclusion ranked lowest, though still high overall - 36% of family respondents believe their child(ren) feels extremely included, and another 43% believe their child(ren) feels mostly included. When asked about their own experience, 34% of families feel extremely included, and another 42% feel mostly included.

Students, families, and staff share a need for greater inclusion, particularly for marginalized populations. In working to understand the variety of lived experiences and perspectives of stakeholders in Mansfield Public Schools, the review team examined data and themes in multiple ways, including holistically, by stakeholder group (e.g., students, families, staff), and by self-identified identity markers (e.g., race, language, ability/disability, gender, etc.). This revealed that when looking more deeply at school and district culture, there are gaps in the experiences of many students, families, and staff who self-identify as part of a marginalized population. Below are community perspectives on culture and inclusivity. *Additional information on student experiences is discussed in Domains 4 and 5. Additional information on family experiences is discussed in Domain 7. Additional information on staff experiences is discussed in Domain 6.*

Figure B: Student response by self-identified marginalized status



**Students had the option to self-identify membership of a marginalized population on the demographic survey item at the end of the full survey.*

What students share about their own need for greater inclusion:

- *"People are judgmental and wary of people who don't fit societal norms but that's a widespread problem I guess. I personally am not close with any of my teachers and don't feel comfortable with sharing more than is necessary."*
- *"The student experience differs from individual to individual, but oftentimes it's harder to be yourself, mainly when you belong to a minority group in a predominantly white school."*
- *"All of my teachers have been extremely helpful and kind towards me. I have never been discriminated against due to my race (I am white) or sexuality (I am straight). I struggle with multiple mental illnesses, and at times it can be isolating and make things more difficult. I have noticed though that my peers of the BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities have had rather unpleasant experiences at [school]."*

What families share about their and their child(ren)'s need for greater inclusion:

- *"They should work hard on fighting discrimination and unconscious biases when staff treats minority children."*
- *"Mansfield says it is equitable - but it really is just a façade. They talk about bullying prevention but don't really support parents when it's reported. They talk about diversity and equity - but if that was true the decisions would be based on factual, practical reasoning and not fear."*
- *"They need to improve their diversity of knowledge and understand different cultures more."*

What staff share about the need for greater inclusion for families and students:

- *"I see teachers and staff not communicating with families because of culture. They use cultural differences to justify why things aren't working."*
- *"Many of us identify it as homophobic, but students bring to my attention things in the community, like the f word being shouted at [them]. We have awesome student advocates and they bring it up but they are kind of met with indifference, minimizing... that is sort of the culture, and it's always been this way."*
- *"One of the things that students brought to my attention is that teachers don't understand that student pronouns are important to them and they ignore their identities."*
- *"We still hold the values in many ways of a predominantly Christian, working/middle-class white community that Mansfield was until more recently. This is a hard change to make. You want to honor and value everyone. I sometimes feel like we talk a good game but do not always act on our positive intentions."*

What staff share about the need for greater inclusion for themselves and their colleagues:

- *"Giving unwavering support and standing behind your BIPOC staff. I have to go out of my comfort zone to beg them for something. For me, it is a bit more of a struggle. That deters staff from staying."*
- *"Those [identity-based] spaces just don't exist as of now, and we have to create them, for equity here it's very heteronormative at this point... so I guess I'm stating it's a lack of equity and care."*
- *"There are a host of differences we are all combating and there is no easy way to go about getting things one may need to do their job in a timely manner with the respect that acknowledges the fact that one has a disability. I should be able to walk into class with the tools I need and not have to fight for them. I have done a lot of fighting and it is exhausting."*

DOMAIN 2: ACCOUNTABILITY FOR EQUITABLE STUDENT ACCESS & OUTCOMES

Accountability for Equitable Student Access and Outcomes:
Policies, systems, and practices enable all students to fully participate in schools, programs, and activities that result in high comparable outcomes.

A major component of accountability for equitable student access and outcomes requires district policies, systems, and practices to reflect a commitment to equity and accountability for the success of all students, particularly focusing attention on marginalized student populations. Schools are held accountable for ensuring that all students can succeed. In addition to complying with laws and regulations, the equitable district ensures that services for special student populations (e.g., English learners, students with IEPs or 504 plans, and gifted/talented students) are of the highest quality. As data on academic achievement and other student outcomes are disaggregated and analyzed, there is a high comparable performance for all identifiable groups of learners, and performance gaps are virtually non-existent.

There is not yet a shared community-wide understanding of and investment in the district's work to improve equity and inclusion for all students.

Stakeholders express varied understanding of and investment in the district's work around diversity, equity, and inclusion. In particular, stakeholders do not have a shared understanding of what equity means in MPS or why it matters, and they often describe different understandings of equity versus equality. Multiple leaders, staff, and family members raised uncertainty about what equity in MPS looks like and means for individual roles, schools, and students. Stakeholders often described equity as equality of opportunity, but did not have a common understanding of what that means in practice or what it would look like to increase equity. At the start of the equity audit process, district leaders acknowledged that they did not have formal MPS definitions of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Some leaders and staff also acknowledged that there is not yet a shared understanding of what diversity, equity, and inclusion mean in MPS. Staff and leaders shared:

- *"Everyone has their own definition of equity and what they think that means, and so everyone has a different experience, and that may influence how they approach others with different needs. Some of us can do that really well, and some teachers are like, 'this is what works, why change?'"*
- *"I think the district confused equality and equity. And then there is justice and liberation, but we are still at equality and trying to find the difference. Even the football team here wrote equality on their helmets. I don't think people realize how their implicit biases impact equity."*

A varied understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion surfaced in focus groups, interviews, and surveys. When asked what equity means, staff and leadership responded, *"Equity is everybody is treated the same. I never really thought about it before"* to *"My familiarity would be when I think equity I think equal"* to *"Treating everybody on an even playing field - the same - whatever your background."* In many cases, stakeholders used equity and equality interchangeably, when their definitions are different. Additionally, when asked what the district can do to be more inclusive and equitable, many staff said they do not know, reported they are unaware of any challenges, and/or believe the district does not need to do anything else to improve. Some family members/caregivers seemed to have a similar response. When asked what equity means to them, family/caregiver responses ranged from: *"Equity is giving everyone EQUAL opportunity. Once*

more resources are extended to a specific individual or group, it can no longer be considered equal by definition.” to “Equity is giving people the opportunity to work towards reaching their goals.”

While many stakeholders indicated their support of the district’s work to understand and strengthen equity and inclusion in MPS, perspectives varied. Surveys and focus group comments ranged from those explicitly in favor of district efforts to those reflecting a lack of understanding and/or support for district efforts. Those in favor of the district’s equity and inclusion work often described a desire for more conversations around why this work matters for students as individuals, changing stigmas and assumptions about students, understanding areas of strength and opportunity, and follow-through. Those with reservations about the district’s equity and inclusion work often shared a desire for equality over equity (or saw them as the same), had questions about the impact of equity work for children and families, and held misconceptions about critical race theory (**which district and school leaders confirmed is not part of MPS’ equity efforts**).

Overall, the vast majority of staff participating in the equity audit surveys and focus groups supported the equity audit and district work to develop cultural competency and increase inclusion. There was more variation in family member responses of those families participating in the equity audit. Table C below includes sample comments that reflect differing perspectives in support for and resistance to MPS’ equity work.

Table C: Family and staff data

	Comments reflecting investment in MPS’ equity work	Comments reflecting lack of investment in MPS’ equity work
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I think having this audit and developing a plan for district improvement in this area is huge in recognizing and supporting the importance of enabling all stakeholders to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance.” “I would love for us to recognize that we need to get more comfortable with having difficult conversations. It needs to be a whole community investment. Learn how to be honest and communicate... We need to move forward with the times. We need the courageous conversations curriculum so we can learn to open up and increase our awareness. There is an underlying vibe.” “I hope we change stigmas, the language around talking about students and communities. They should be mindful of making significant changes and meaningful changes. We need to change how we treat, address, and speak to students. They are our most important consumers. If they are not benefitting, it is not good.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I don’t think we need an equity audit. I want students treated with equality.” “I believe equity, while well-intentioned, is the wrong direction. If anything, I’d encourage the district to stop hyper-focusing on race, gender, and sexuality and get back to basics in the classroom.” “I refuse to answer many of the questions on this survey as it is a slanted survey looking for a particular outcome with which I do not agree... Personally and by law, everyone should be treated equally and as members of the human race, not by any identifying characteristics.”
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I am curious to see the results of the equity audit. Where are the deficiencies? I am exposed to a lot. I would like to know why. Are there glaring deficiencies that need to be addressed that are not brought forth in MPS?” “Respect. We are all people. The school has 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I believe this audit is a slippery slope. I believe certain people in our school system want to use this term “equity” for their own personal agenda.” “This audit needs to explain the difference between equality and equity. Equality is fair and justified. Equity is unfair and unjustified.

	<p>been doing a good job to share that message about our individuality and acceptance. This isn't just a school issue; it is a societal one. It is challenging and will take time. Let's look at what we have had for successes and what has changed about our schools. Share that message, and the successes so more are aware."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I think they are going to be blindsided by the results of this equity audit. I want a concrete action plan to see that they are following through. I do not want them to just check off the boxes." 	<p>To try to control equity of outcome, which is what this is doing, is wrong and racist and not fair."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I do not like that you are sending out a survey about equity. You are insinuating that groups versus other groups should be getting preferential treatment based on the color of their skin or how they classify themselves. I teach my kids to work hard and succeed, not fall into a category as an excuse why they do not. These are children. This is a terrible lesson to be teaching. We all know about CRT. This survey isn't disguising it."
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During the summer of 2021, the district developed definitions and shared understandings of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Feedback was requested on the definitions from all stakeholders, and the feedback was predominantly positive, but not all feedback was affirmative. Prior to beginning the Equity Audit journey, the Mansfield Public Schools found it important and necessary to begin to work towards a shared understanding of the meaning of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). To this end, they held a leadership work session in the summer of 2021 to build the definitions of these terms together with the goal of sharing them with the entire district and community. After the definitions were drafted by the leadership team, they were included in the Equity Audit surveys for feedback. The district felt that this work would set the stage for their journey of accountability in ensuring equitable student access and outcomes in the Mansfield Public Schools.

Mansfield Public Schools defined **diversity** as: "Diversity is all the dimensions of difference that exist in groups, including race, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, religion, cognitive style, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, education, marital status, language, ability, veteran status, physical appearance, etc. The district desires to have a shared understanding of what it means to have and value diversity, which is the reason it was included in the survey for feedback. The surveys were administered to all members of the school district, as well as to families. Table D illustrates the results of the question concerning the definition presented in the surveys and the percentages of agreement with the district-developed definition of "diversity."

Table D: Diversity definition agreement

Diversity is all the dimensions of difference that exist in groups, including race, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, religion, cognitive style, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, education, marital status, language, ability, veteran status, physical appearance, etc. What are your thoughts on this definition? Would you add or take anything away from this definition?	
Leadership	91 % Agree
Staff	97% Agree
Families	71% Agree

As indicated above, leadership, staff, and families/caregivers had the opportunity to weigh in on the district's developed definition of diversity. For a small number of participants, the definition seemed to be an area of disagreement. However, the majority indicated agreement.

Mansfield Public Schools defined **equity** as: "Equity is everyone getting what they need to fully participate, prosper, and reach their goals and potential in school and in life. Equity recognizes that every individual has

unique strengths and needs, which means that different (not same/equal) solutions are necessary for access and opportunity.” Because equity is the driving force behind this Equity Audit, the district desired feedback on this definition of equity to gauge whether stakeholders have a shared understanding of the meaning of equity. The following question was on the survey that was administered to all members of the school district, as well as to families. Table E below provides the percentages of those who agree with this equity description as it applies to the district.

Table E: Equity definition agreement

Equity is everyone getting what they need to fully prosper and reach their goals and potential in school and in life. Equity recognizes that every individual has unique strengths and needs, which means that different (not same/equal) solutions are necessary for access and opportunity. What are your thoughts on this definition? Would you add or take anything away from this definition?	
Leadership	74% Agree
Staff	93% Agree
Families	76% Agree

The results indicated that the majority of the leadership, staff, and families/caregivers agree that this is a suitable and workable definition, as well as a description of equity for the Mansfield Public School District, which is moving the district in a positive direction.

The vast majority of the caregivers/families (76%) who weighed in on this definition of equity in the survey agreed that the definition was suitable. However, some caregivers/families believed that achieving equity would mean inequitable disbursement of resources and that everyone should have an equal platform. Also, some disagreed with the notion of conducting an Equity Audit and believed it was another way of framing *critical race theory* (CRT), which is not the intent of this Equity Audit.

Mansfield Public Schools defined **inclusion** as: *Inclusion is the practice of creating nurturing environments in which each individual feels welcomed, respected, supported, safe, and valued as a participating member. As with the “diversity” and “equity” definitions, most leadership, staff, and families agree that the definition is suitable for the district. For example, a staff member stated: *I agree 100 % with this statement as it is written.* A few of the reflections given by staff were not in disagreement with the definition as a whole but around some of the word choices and additional wording in the definition. The robust feedback indicates that participants genuinely considered the relevance and impact on the district and the community. Staff with concerns about the definition stated:*

- *“I have a bit of trouble with the word respected. As that implies that if I were to redirect or correct your behavior or your essay/test, you may feel I disrespected you. It is an overused word.”*
- *“Maybe we could include something about creating nurturing environments “despite differences in identity traits.”*
- *“I feel the definition is missing something. It seems to say, “if you create it, it will happen,” but inclusion takes work. It is beyond creating. It is promoting, supporting, maintaining, and actively participating in such environments.”*
- *“This is a good basic definition. I would add something about being a safe space to ask questions and disagree respectfully. I think inclusion sometimes gets confused with agreement.”*

Families/caregivers also weighed in on the definition of “inclusion.” Most families/caregivers agreed with the definition of inclusion; some even offered additional ideas around inclusion and emphasized the importance in their schools and community. One family/caregiver described the community as predominantly white, heteronormative and further expressed the need for this work. Some seemed to

respond in a manner that could be considered offensive in some arenas. This is an area for the district to consider as the journey towards equity continues. Table F illustrates the percentages of those that agreed with the definition of inclusion as written. Most members of the district and the majority of the families/caregivers surveyed, agreed with the district definition of inclusion.

Table F: Inclusion definition agreement

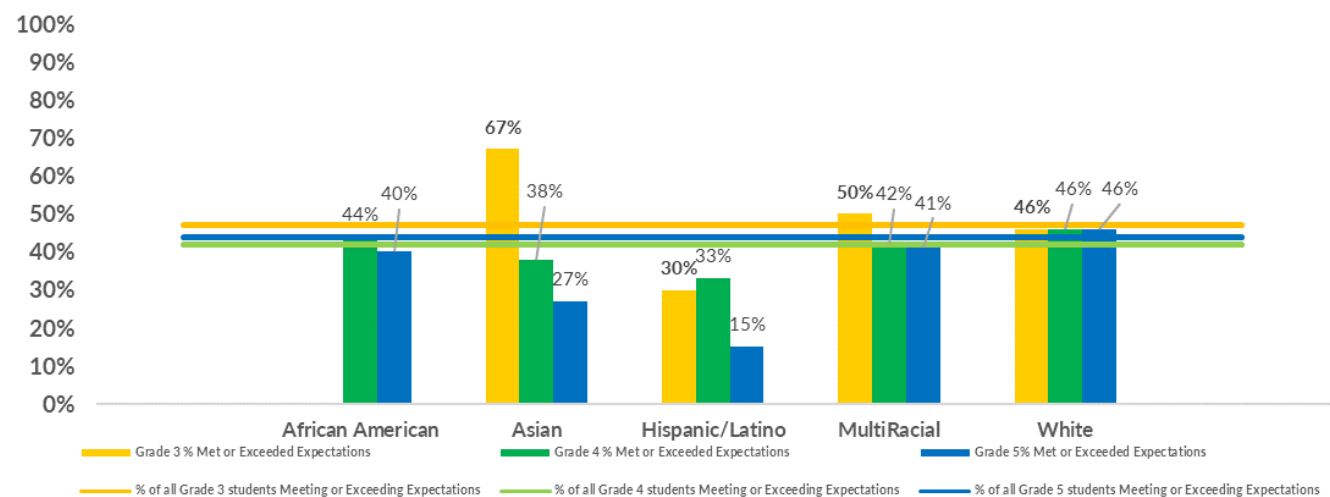
<i>Inclusion is the practice of creating nurturing environments in which each individual feels welcomed, respected, supported, safe, and valued as a participating member. What are your thoughts on this definition? Would you add or take anything away from this definition?</i>	
Leadership	96 % Agree
Staff	97% Agree
Families	70% Agree

See appendix for additional qualitative data illustrating perceptions of MPS draft DEI definitions.

The district as a whole has positive performance on standardized tests. However, there is a disparity in the performance of BIPOC students and White students. Performance gaps exist for all student groups except for White students at both the elementary and middle school levels.

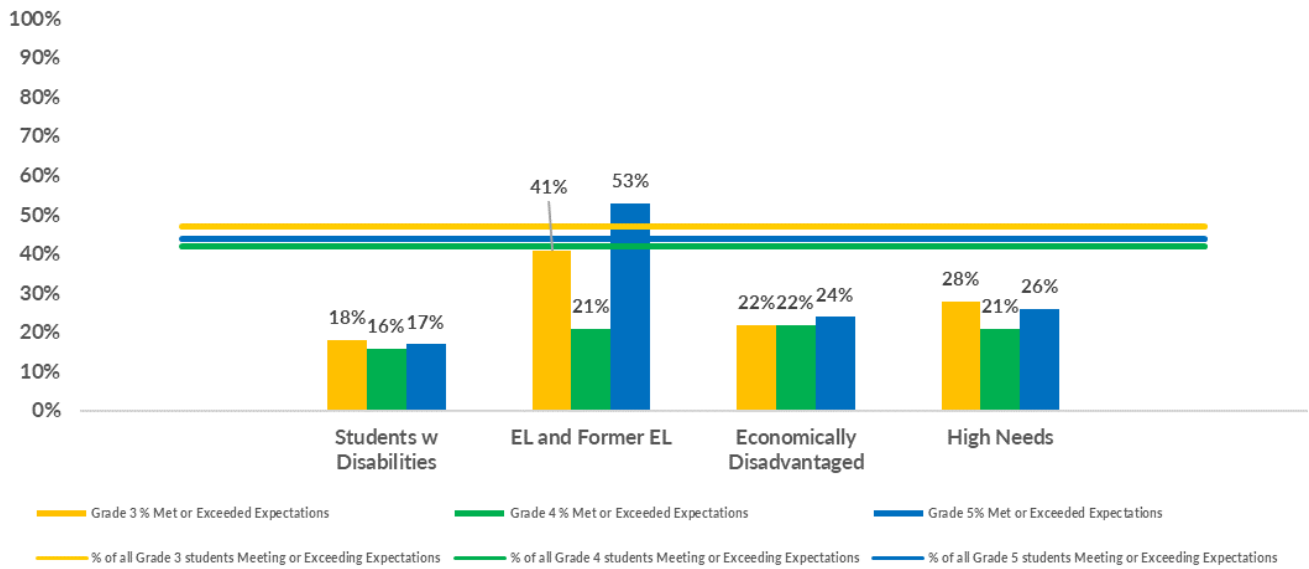
As evidenced by the 2020- 2021 MCAS scores, *Mansfield Public School students outperformed students across the state of Massachusetts in both ELA and Mathematics at most grade levels tested. However, there are still disparities among African American students, Hispanic students, Economically Disadvantaged students, English Learners, and students with disabilities* where students fell below the state average scores in ELA and Mathematics. These results indicate that there is some measure of difference that students from marginalized populations are experiencing. Figures C - L below illustrate the performance percentages.

Figure C: Elementary MCAS ELA Performance by race/ethnicity



*Data for groups with less than 6 students is suppressed.

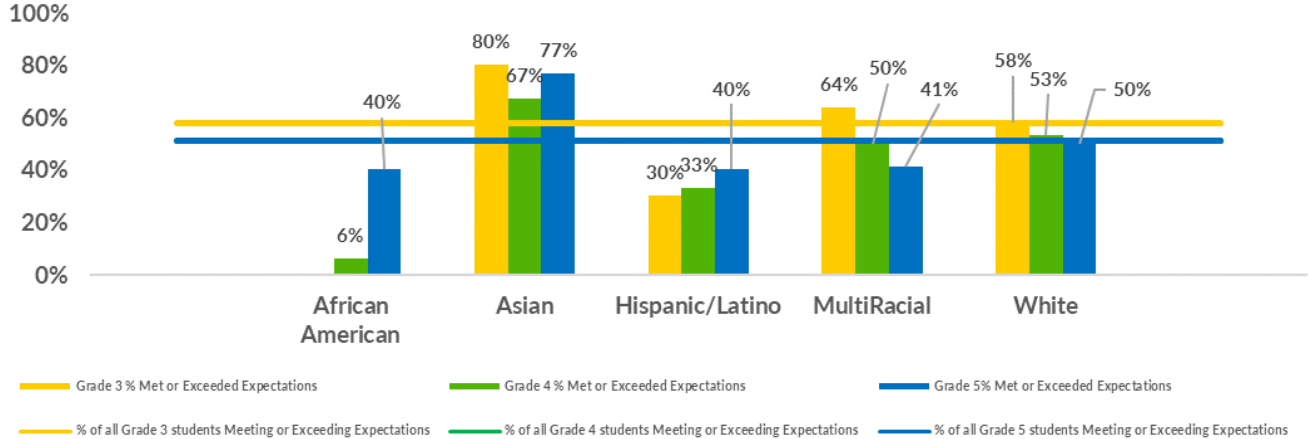
Figure D: Elementary MCAS performance by special populations



*Students with disabilities indicate the percentage of enrollment who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

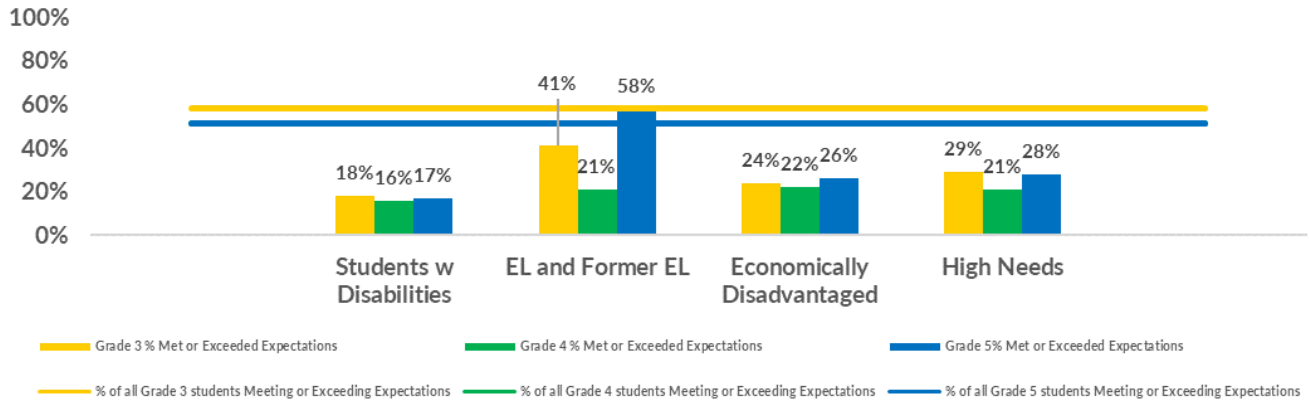
*EL and Former EL students indicate the percentage of enrollment who are English learners, defined as “a student whose first language is a language other than English who is unable to perform ordinary classroom work in English.

Figure E: Elementary MCAS Mathematics performance by race/ethnicity



*Grade 4 and Grade 5 have the same percentage of students meeting or exceeding grade level expectations, so only one line is shown on the chart above.

Figure F: Elementary MCAS Mathematics performance by special populations

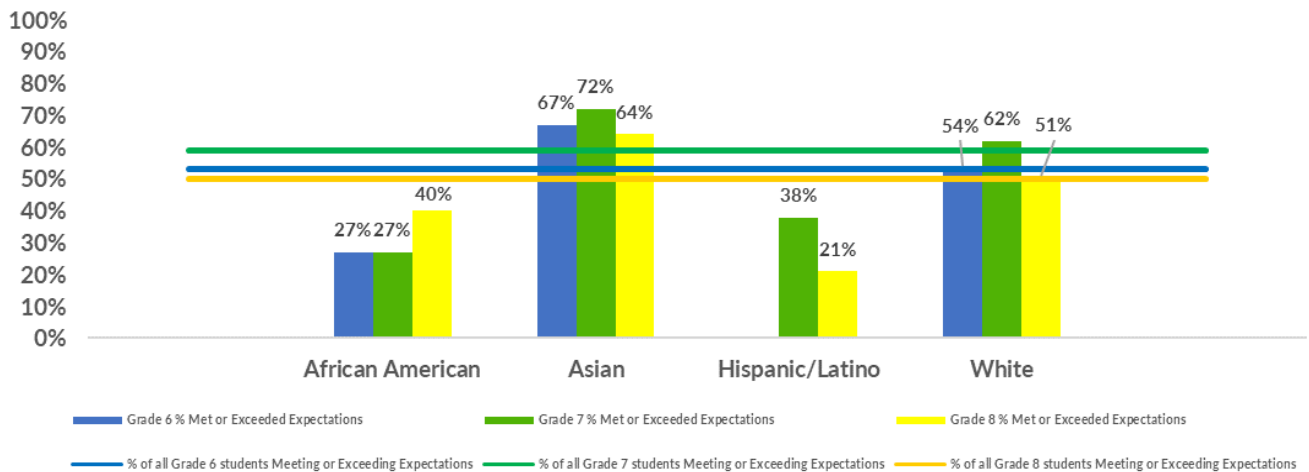


*Grade 4 and Grade 5 have the same percentage of students meeting or exceeding grade level expectations, so only one line is shown on the chart above.

*Students with disabilities indicate the percentage of enrollment who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

*EL and Former EL students indicate the percentage of enrollment who are English learners, defined as “a student whose first language is a language other than English who is unable to perform ordinary classroom work in English.

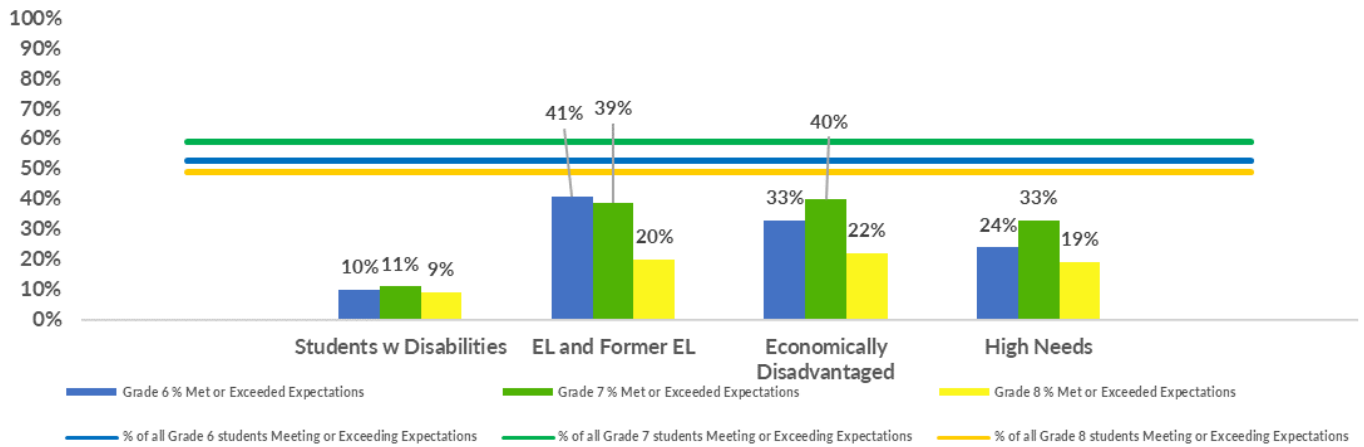
Figure G: Middle School MCAS ELA performance by race/ethnicity



*Students with disabilities indicate the percentage of enrollment who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

*EL and Former EL students indicate the percentage of enrollment who are English learners, defined as “a student whose first language is a language other than English who is unable to perform ordinary classroom work in English.

Figure H: Middle School MCAS ELA performance by special populations



*Students with disabilities indicate the percentage of enrollment who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

*EL and Former EL students indicate the percentage of enrollment who are English learners, defined as "a student whose first language is a language other than English who is unable to perform ordinary classroom work in English."

Figure I: Middle school MCAS Mathematics performance by race/ethnicity

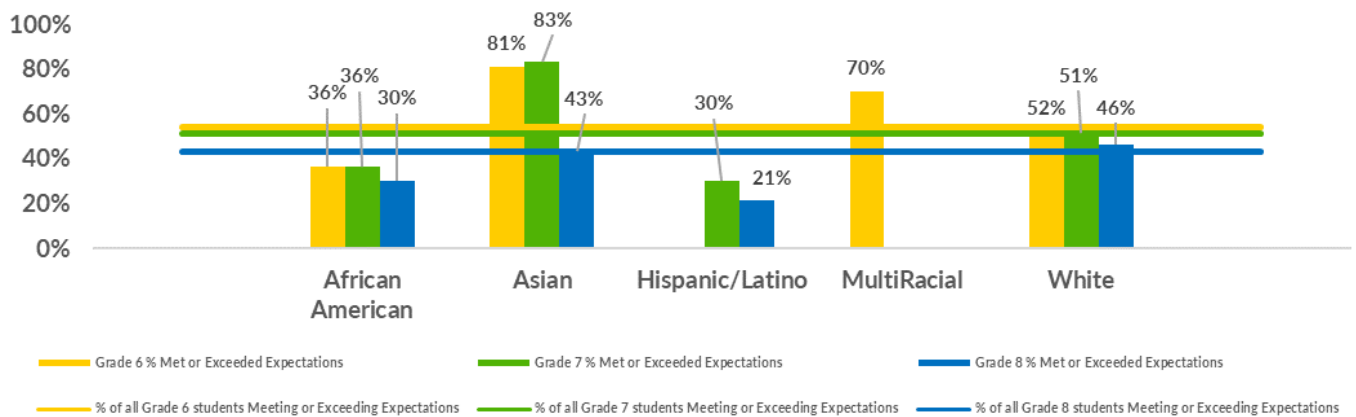
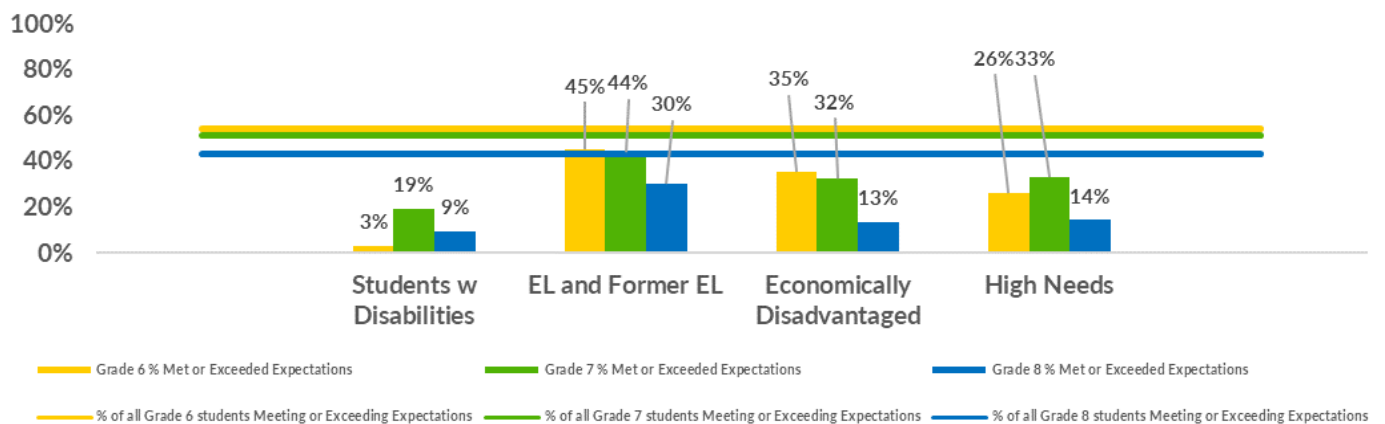


Figure J: Middle School MCAS Mathematics performance by special populations



*Students with disabilities indicate the percentage of enrollment who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

*EL and Former EL students indicate the percentage of enrollment who are English learners, defined as "a student whose first language is a language other than English who is unable to perform ordinary classroom work in English."

Figure K: High School (Grade 10) MCAS ELA performance by race/ethnicity

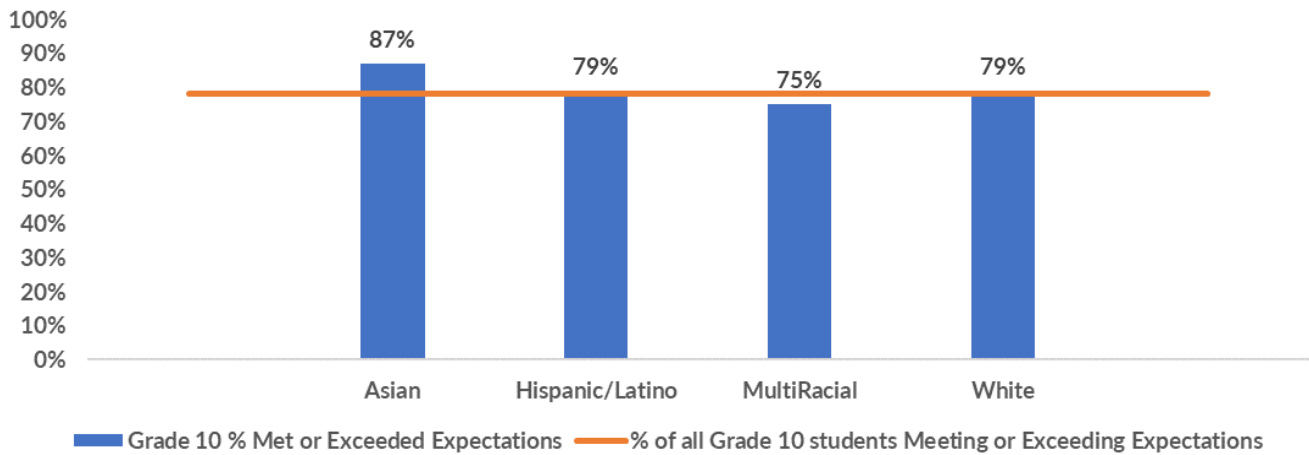
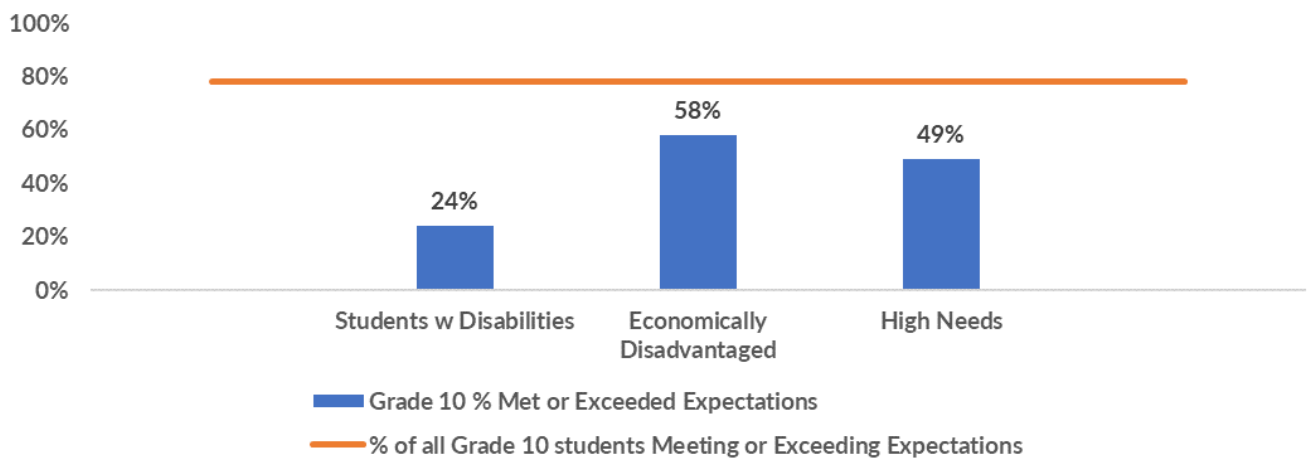


Figure L: High School (Grade 10) MCAS ELA performance by special populations



*Students with disabilities indicate the percentage of enrollment who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

*EL and Former EL students indicate the percentage of enrollment who are English learners, defined as "a student whose first language is a language other than English who is unable to perform ordinary classroom work in English."

Figure M: High School (Grade 10) MCAS Mathematics performance by race/ethnicity

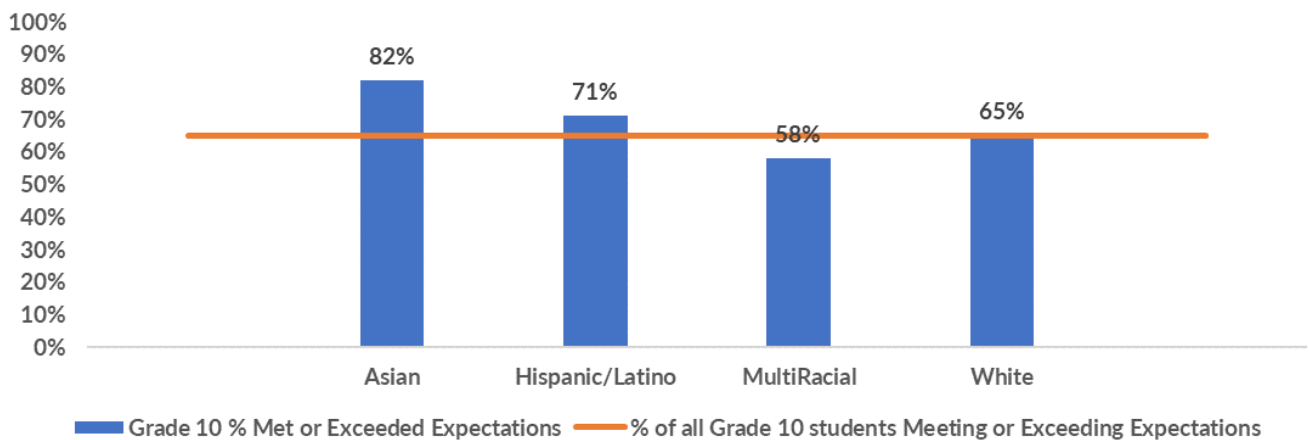
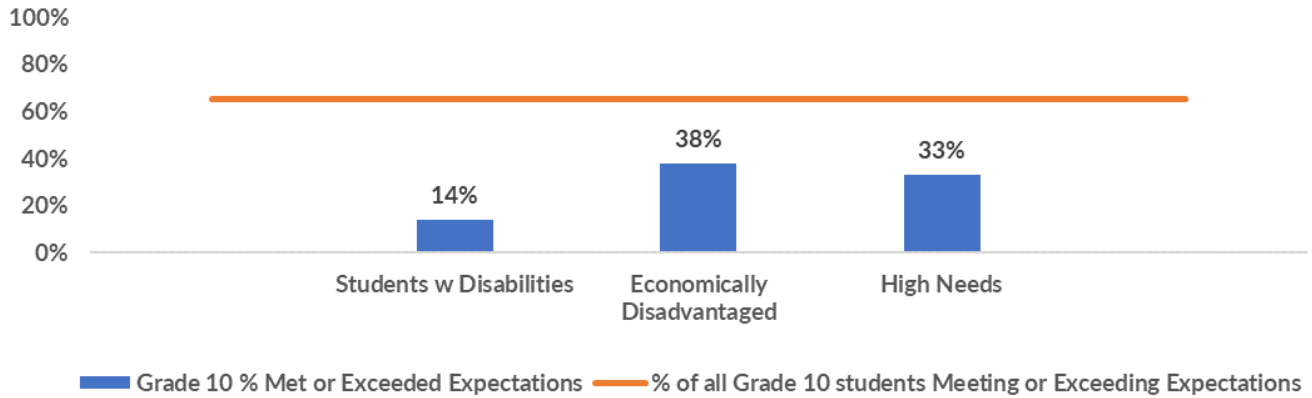


Figure N: High School (Grade 10) MCAS Mathematics performance by special populations



*Students with disabilities indicate the percentage of enrollment who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

*EL and Former EL students indicate the percentage of enrollment who are English learners, defined as “a student whose first language is a language other than English who is unable to perform ordinary classroom work in English.”

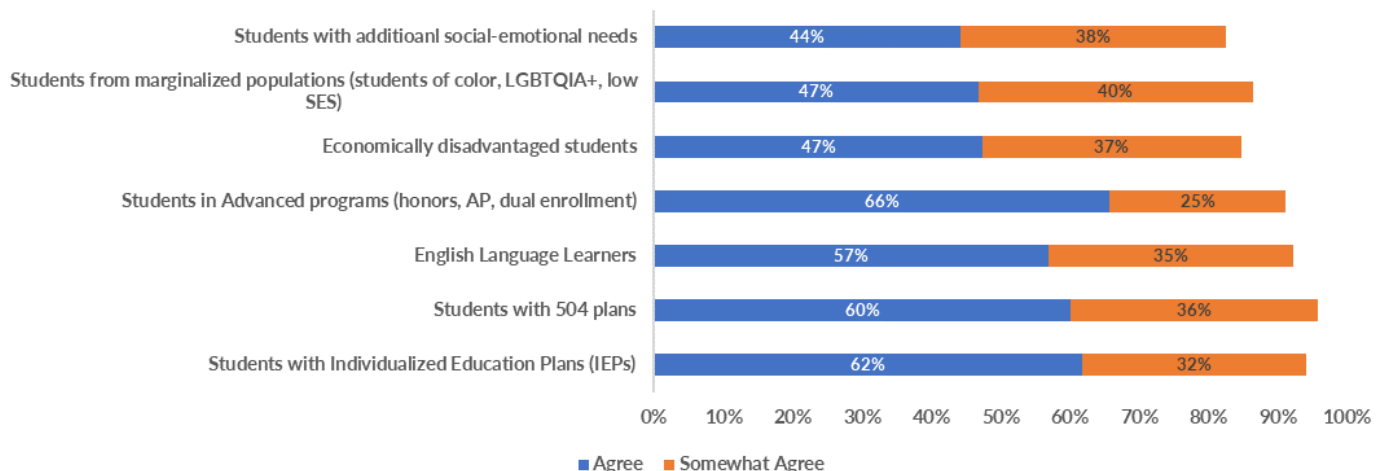
The state testing data indicates a disparity in the overall performance of White and BIPOC students, students with disabilities, and marginalized students. However, the district staff are aware of this concern and have provided greater and more appropriate support for students with disabilities. Leadership stated:

- *“Looking for tools to support our students in financial need - in the classroom. I feel I am swimming upstream as hard as I can. Anything.”*
- *“Issue came out that we were not being just or right to individuals with disabilities.”*
- *“When you dig deeper, there are some subgroups that we have some opportunity to do better.”*
- *“No evidence that there is a comparable performance for all groups of learners.”*

In addition, per the staff survey, 71.1% agreed that there is a need to re-examine policies, systems, and structures to ensure they equitably support the success of all students, particularly those from marginalized populations. Despite some concerns, as noted above, when asked on the survey, the majority of the staff believe that most students’ needs are being met in the district. The percentage of agreement on the statement, “My school, provides an equitable, high-quality education for students:” from various groups is illustrated in Figure O (staff responses) and Figure P (leadership responses).

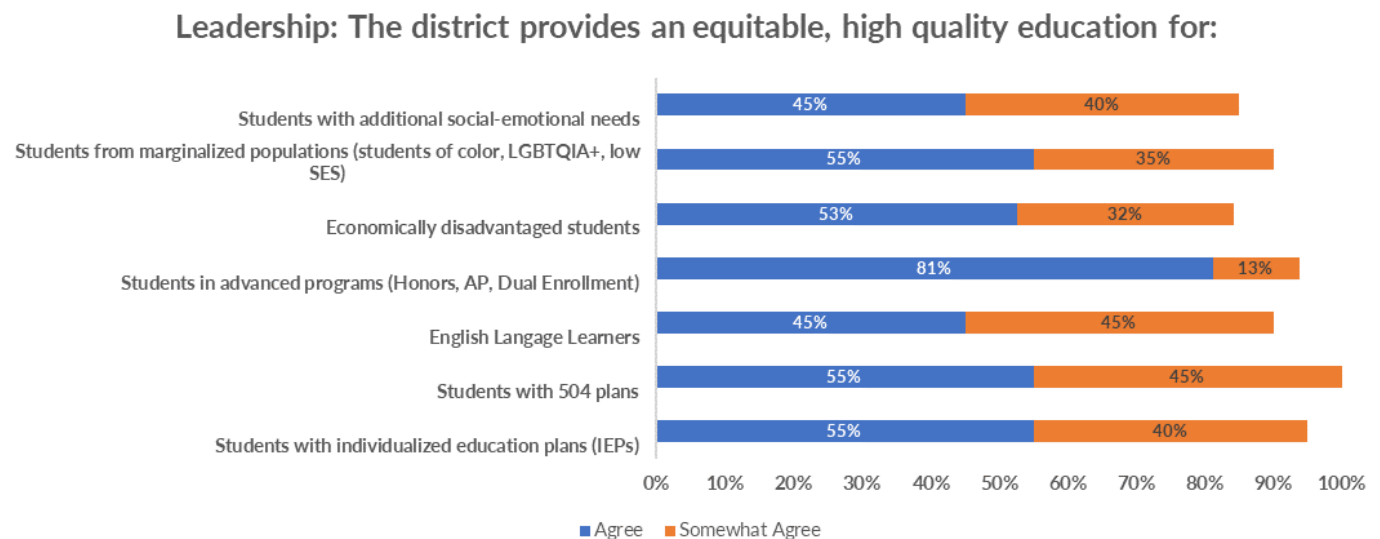
Figure O: Staff response to school providing an equitable, high quality education

Staff: My school provides an equitable, high quality education for:



Leadership had a similar response when asked to respond to the statement about the district as a whole, “My school provides an equitable, high-quality education for students.”

Figure P: Leadership response to the district providing an equitable, high-quality education



The figures above show that English Learners are a group that also lags behind the mainstream population. There is a need to consider the learning and school experience of English learners and their families. During the focus group period of this Equity Audit, it was noticeable that district efforts to reach families of English Learners were unsuccessful. One attempt by the district to reach more families was to request that the Family Surveys be prepared in ten languages, including English. The invitation to participate in the focus groups was included in the translated surveys. Yet, efforts did not result in participation by English Learner Caregivers/Families in focus groups, signaling an opportunity and need for MPS to strengthen relationships with all district families. Moving forward, it is worthwhile to ensure that there is direct contact with EL families because building trust and making personal connections with all families is often a catalyst for greater participation in the education of and support for their children.

MPS was informed during the week of March 14, 2022, that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (DESE’s) Office of Language Acquisition would conduct a Tiered Focused Monitoring Review of Mansfield Public Schools. The Office of Language Acquisition reviews each district’s and charter school’s ELE program every six years to monitor compliance with federal and state English learner education laws and regulations. This audit may reveal the areas of improvement that are necessary in the district, even though 90% of leadership reported in the Equity Audit survey that the district provides high-quality education for EL students. However, leadership is aware of some of the gaps that already exist. There are concerns about staffing, resources, and other areas. Leadership and staff stated:

- “There are meetings that we have on Mondays to identify students who are not meeting benchmarks. There are reading and math interventions. We had a special math class during vacation week (For ELL students).”
- “Oftentimes, teachers are overwhelmed by all the students. It’s our role to be our advocate; at the beginning of the year, this school had no ELs, and they didn’t know exactly what to do, and I met with them and showed them strategies.”
- “ESL, there is no set curriculum like a math or science textbook, but the district is always willing to buy us what we need, and we have a library. We have books and access to the Newcomer curriculum they bought us, the different WIDA references.”
- “No EL teacher assigned to RG school.”
- “We over refer EL students for SPED, and our population is not large in comparison.”

- *"My biggest concern is not academically, but socially for my students because we don't have large numbers of students from other countries and races. I have an international student, and she says nobody talks to me. Kids are all struggling socially, but sometimes our students can feel marginalized. In my class, they all get along. It's great, but once they go into content classrooms, they are lonely and do not make friends."*
- *"At the beginning of the year, this school had no ELs prior, and they didn't know exactly what to do, and I met with them and showed them strategies."*
- *"No set planning time, teachers ask for assistance in materials, informal, but it happens."*
- *"Email or teachers come down to my classroom when they have free time, no set planning time, teachers ask for assistance in materials, informal, but it happens."*

Efforts must be made to ensure that ELL students are considered and included in the learning environment and that special considerations are given to curriculum development, as well as including culturally sustaining pedagogy. The Equity Audit revealed some areas where the district is making efforts towards improvement and other areas where the circumstances around ELL are dire. Providing regular, structured planning time and including culturally inclusive materials could be other methods of supporting and sustaining the learning of ELL students.

There was an opportunity to capture information in the Equity Audit concerning English Learning students from leadership and staff, but similar to English Learner families, the participation of English Learning students in focus groups was low, which hindered the ability to fully capture student voice in this group.

There are gaps in student access to and participation in advanced courses for students identified as economically disadvantaged, marginalized, high needs, English learners, and students with disabilities.

Most students enrolled in advanced courses are White. Low numbers of African American and Hispanic students are enrolled in Advanced courses, and no EL students are enrolled. In addition, African American (ELA: 3.2%, Math: 35.8%) and Hispanic (ELA: 14.8%, Math: 51.9%) students were less likely to complete the advanced courses. Figures Q and R provide the percentages of student completion rates. Please note that the rates represent the percentage of students who completed an advanced course from those who were enrolled, and do not reflect the percentage of students from the total population.

Figure Q: 2021 Advanced Coursework Completion by Race/Ethnicity

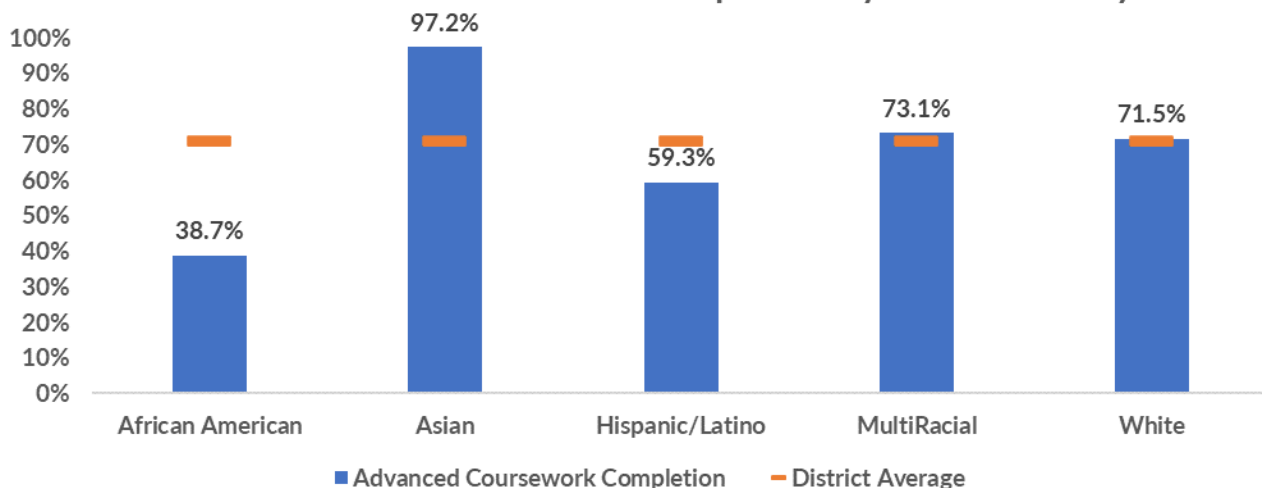
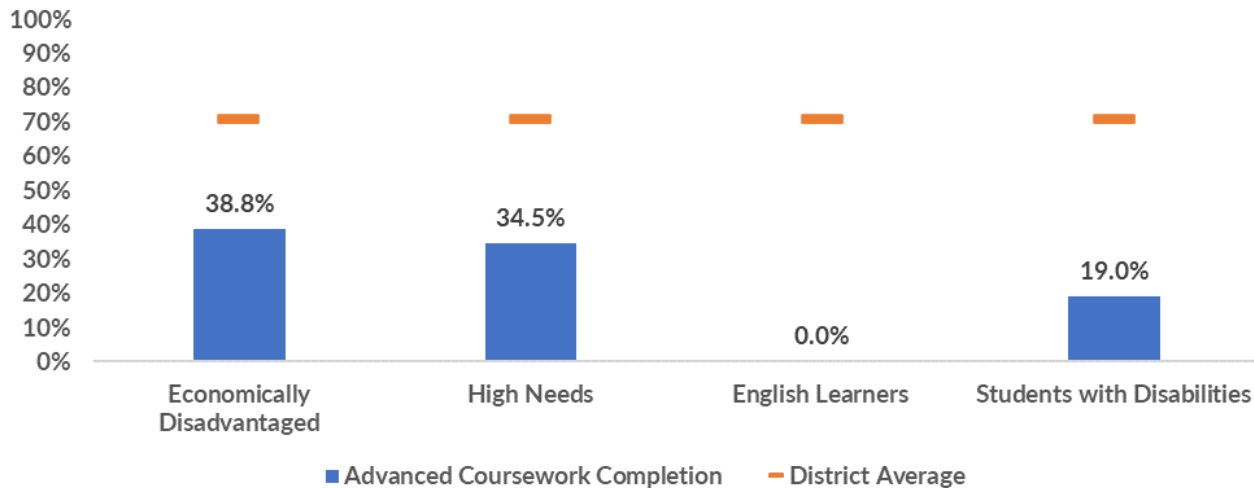


Figure R: 2021 Advanced Coursework Completion by Special Populations



In the focus groups, staff expressed their awareness of this disproportionality:

- *"A distressingly high proportion of my Black students every year are in low-level classes, and very few are in Honors classes. I don't know how far down in grade level that trend is apparent, but I highly doubt that it becomes a problem in high school."*
- *"The most important thing would be to make sure that implicit bias does not keep students from accessing higher-level courses."*
- *"Students of color, not enough students in advanced courses."*

Families expressed concern about their students having awareness and access to advanced coursework. They did not feel that effort was made to inform them of the advanced course offerings. When asked, "To what extent do you believe your child(ren) has access to advanced courses?" Families stated:

- *"I have no clue about how to access advanced courses. No one has ever reached out to me about this. I have a MS who has straight A's."*
- *"My daughter started in grade 6. She was homeschooled prior. She did really well and placed in regular classes. High scoring, there has been no talk to challenge her or push her. It's just there you go. Was there a test to figure out placement? Not looking at transcripts? No call to me."*
- *"As a parent, I feel my student needs more guidance and communication with the counselor so that he knows the school's expectations for college preparatory courses."*
- *"Guidance tries, but there are too many students per counselor. Parents who are well off can hire external counselors."*

On the contrary, one parent stated that MPS offers opportunities to all students: *"My daughter is in advanced placement. They offered it right from the get-go, and she's been on that since the get-go. Everyone got the opportunity to take it."* It is positive that this family had this experience. However, there is no evidence that this experience is universal. The differences experienced by families are an area to further understand and address. It is imperative to ensure that *all* families are informed of advanced opportunities and that students have the opportunity and access to advanced levels of education.

Even though there was a small number of BIPOC, High needs, Economically Disadvantaged, and Special Education students enrolled in advanced courses, there was a notable difference in completion rates. The data shows that the students who were the most successful in completing advanced coursework were White, Asian, and without special needs.

MPS graduation rates are high overall. However, there are gaps for African-American students, Hispanic students, and students pursuing alternate post secondary pathways.

A reasonable number of high school students who attend MPS go on to college. However, some elect another route into adulthood. Some students would like to take on careers or enlist in the military following high school graduation. Students electing these options desire the same level of support and guidance from the school district. Stakeholders express some concern that the largest amount of post-secondary support is for those electing the traditional college route. Students stated:

- *"In Mansfield, we have good numbers for graduation and students who attend four-year colleges, and they want to keep it that way, but other opportunities should be explored. I wanted to go to a trade school, but we never talked about that. The only thing I was offered was a meeting with a counselor. Now, I want to go to an online school. Night school teachers offer more support. I got transcripts when I asked. In day school, there is a process, and if you don't want to go, you are looked down on. There are a lot of things that impact that."*
- *"Have more diversity in teachers and more classes that aren't focused on just getting into college."*
- *"Our curriculum is heavily geared towards college preparation. We need to continue to build opportunities for kids that may be better served at Bristol Aggie or Southeastern but don't attend those schools either due to academics or for social reasons."*

Staff also expressed this awareness: *"We claim to be a comprehensive high school; however, we only offer a college preparatory curriculum to students. Students should be encouraged and supported to find opportunities that are not only related to college if there are fields of interest. That would include having different elective and academic courses to match needs and goals - beyond those that satisfy state requirements."* Families/caregivers also shared similar concerns. One parent stated: *"We have two vo-tech schools in Mansfield. MPS does not prepare their kids for this other avenue. They do not teach them in 8th grade that certain things are needed to attend these schools. In Brockton, they get their students ready. They have interviews, involvement, and check discipline records. They don't prepare families for this."*

The graduation rates are high for the district overall. However, the student group with the lowest graduation rate is the African American student group. Also, the African American and Hispanic groups are the only groups that fall below the overall percentage. The bar graphs on the following page represent graduation rate data. Figure S shows that 82.4% of African American students and 93% of Hispanic students graduate. Note that 100% of Asian students and 97% of white students graduated from the district. Based on this and state data, it is evident that there is a difference in the success of various student groups in school. Figures R and T show the trends of the 4 and 5-year graduation rates for the 19-20SY and 20- 21 SY, respectively. Both school years have similar trends. **Although there was some improvement in the 20 - 21 SY, students in special populations still graduated at a lower rate than the overall student population.**

In moving toward becoming a more equitable school district, it is imperative to utilize an equity lens to ensure that all student populations have the support that they need to matriculate high school and become world-ready.

Figure S: SY 2021: 4 - Year Graduation Rate by Race/Ethnicity

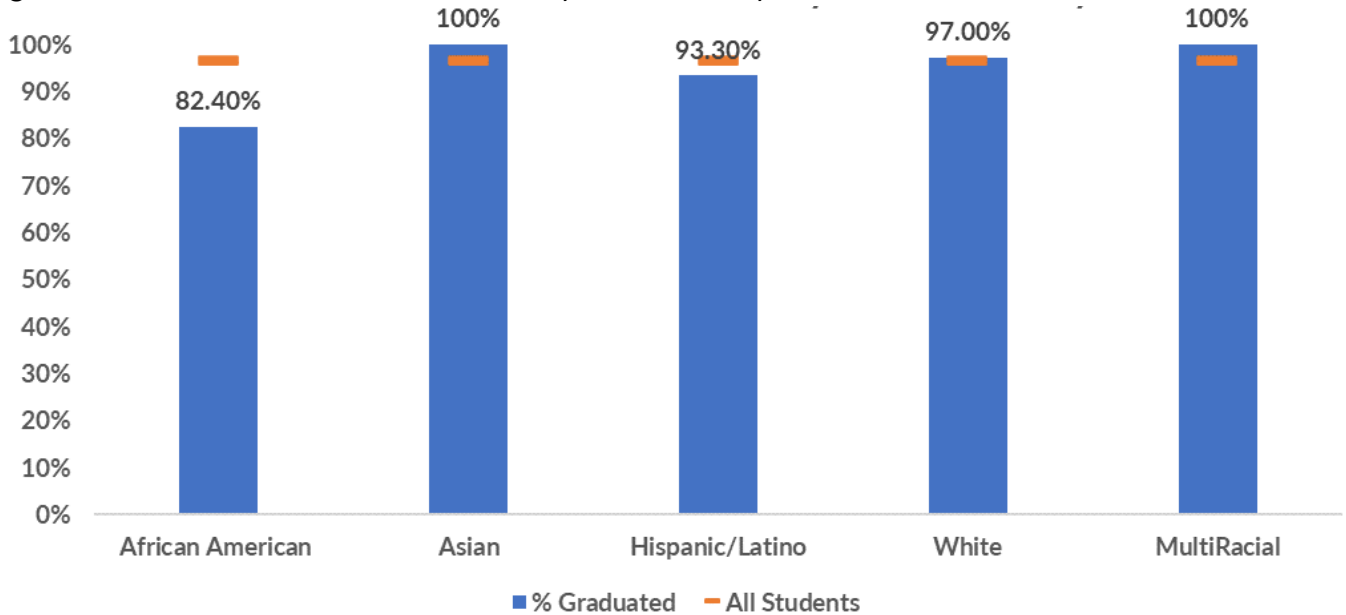


Figure R: 2019 – 2020, 4- Year and 5-Year Graduation Rates for Special Population Students

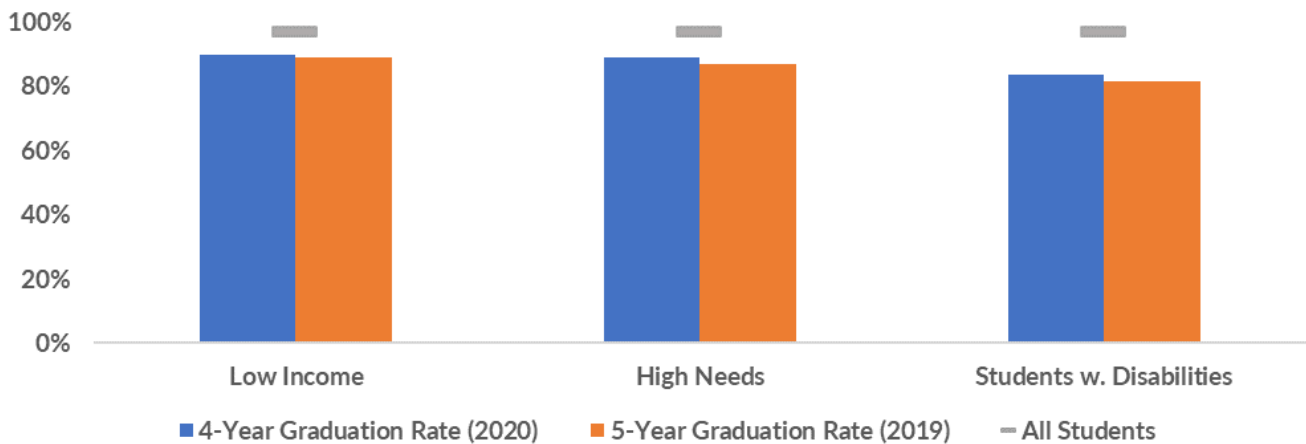
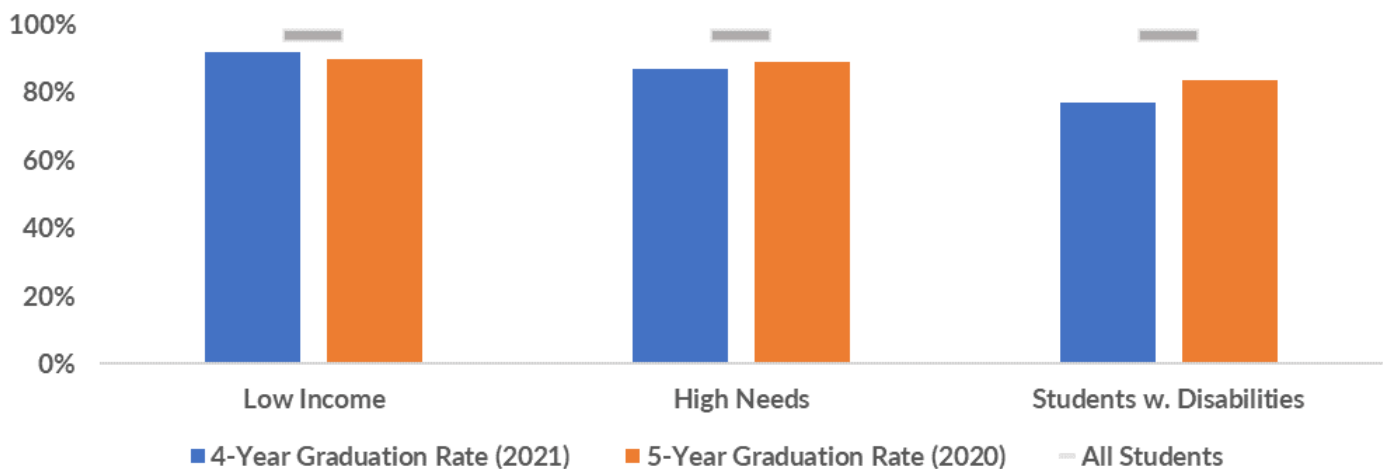


Figure T: 2020 -2021 4-Year and 5-Year Graduation Rate for Special Population Students



DOMAIN 3: GOVERNANCE & CONDITIONS

Governance and Conditions: Clear and equitable school committee/board and central office structures, systems, processes, and practices work together to advance the district towards its vision. The district commitment to equity is reflected in governance and central office structures, systems, policies, and practices.

The MPS central office, leadership, and school committee demonstrate an orientation of support and collaboration, and a focus on student success, that provides a foundation for coherence across improvement efforts.

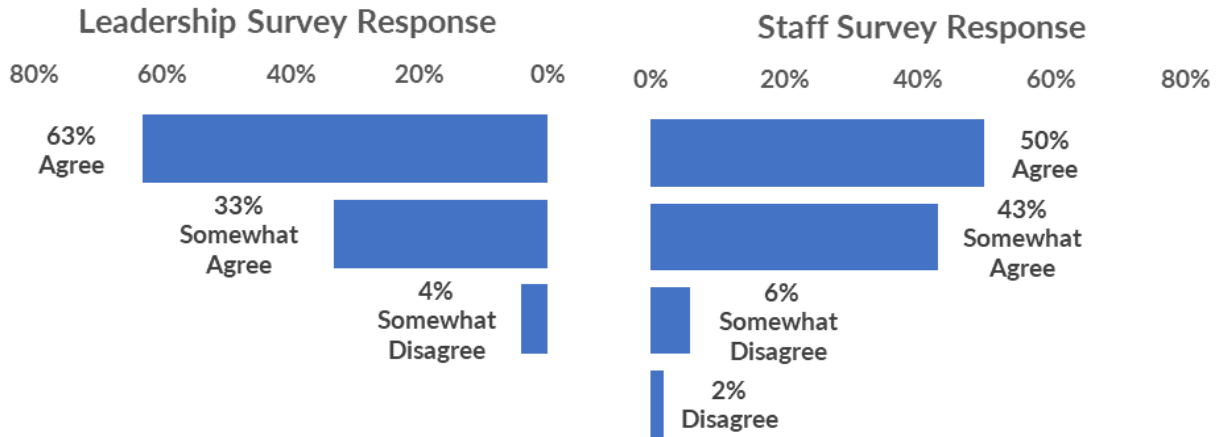
Central office orientation is generally one of support for schools and students, with a focus on providing a high-quality education for MPS students. A review of the organizational chart reflects defined departments, functional areas, and reporting structures to coordinate services with schools and staff. MPS board-approved policies include clear statements of purpose for key central office functional areas that reflect an orientation of support for students. For example, policy EEA states, “The major purpose of the school system’s transportation services is to aid students in getting to and from school in an efficient, safe, and economical manner,” and policy FA describes the facilities’ development goal “to provide the facilities needed for the number and educational requirements of students in the school system.” The school committee’s operational goals also reflect a desire and intent to meet the needs of students through appropriate governance. Policy BA states, “The Mansfield School Committee’s primary responsibility is to establish those purposes, programs, and procedures that will best produce the educational achievement needed by our students,” and the committee’s personnel policy goal (GA) states that “they are responsible to the students and residents of the school district they represent to ensure that the highest quality individuals available are hired to meet the needs of the district.”

In focus groups and interviews, central office leaders and staff consistently describe their aim as supporting staff, schools, students, and the MPS community. When asked how they think about their role in meeting school and district needs, leaders and staff shared statements including:

- “Ensuring we are balanced and have conversations; we have the right tool at the right time. Giving people precisely what they need. Helping teachers develop skills... Help teachers help students. Put more tools specifically in the teacher toolbox.”
- “Support school leadership and staff to do their work. Trying to stay ahead of the trends.”
- “Trying to support [the] community and schools to get back to operations; the world is kind of unhappy and angry right now, and we’re trying to overcome the heat.”
- “My role is to help us as a district look at ourselves and find data that may lead us to spend our time and resources wisely. To make sure we are making movements in areas to see some effects. We have to figure out our plan. If data is lacking, let’s identify that and have conversations on what and why.”
- “I think that for me, the past two years have been so focused on covid that we don’t have the bandwidth to move forward...We tried to be intentional about things around economic disadvantage. To be sure that we are raising questions around courses, supplies, budget-supported 1:1 initiative, and Chromebooks. We focused on some way to get wifi access, hotspots, and families who didn’t have access.”
- “We added interventionists to help students through the pandemic -- and we have been proactive in stating to the town we need to maintain these positions long term. The town has been supportive.”

Leaders and staff overwhelmingly indicate agreement that **decisions and decision-making processes demonstrate understanding of and respect for the identities of students, families, and staff.** Leadership and staff survey responses to the corresponding survey question are below.

Figure U: Leadership and staff survey responses



Many school leaders and staff agree that the central office is oriented around a value of supporting the school, staff, family, and student needs. Examples include:

- *"In the central office, we have good support; the campus model helps because we can all be in communication with each other; we see each other all the time."*
- *"I feel like our needs at each building are met because our needs are generated by us as school leaders. We are allowed to advocate for what we need at each building. If we show what we need by data, we usually get what we need. There hasn't really been a time I haven't got what I need. We are equal as a district."*
- *"Mansfield is really good at listening to staff [and] giving support. The admin really values parent opinion more than other districts I've been in. Really good. There is some movement and conversations around bettering the district in terms of race/ethnicity."*

The MPS administrative team shares a culture of collaboration and collective decision-making. The administrative team, which includes both school leaders and central office leaders, meets weekly to make decisions and ensure schools have the support they need. Leaders are clear on their individual roles and share multiple examples of how they work together to address district needs, further strategic priorities, and collaborate on individual school and district-wide efforts. A review of the district and school improvement plan reveals efforts to align strategic work across all schools. See more on this in Domain 9: School Management. The intent to engage others in decision-making is also evident in school committee policy. For example, policy DA states that district fiscal management functions should "engage in thorough advance planning, with staff and community involvement, in order to develop budgets and to guide expenditures so as to achieve the greatest educational returns and the greatest contributions to the educational program in relation to dollars expended." This applies to school-level decision-making as well, such as in Policy CHCA, which states the expectation that school principals and school councils will work together to develop and annually review/revise student handbooks.

Leaders and staff describe that collaboration goes beyond policy and is part of day-to-day practice. Leaders and staff share examples of collaborative decision-making processes in everything from professional development and curricular decisions to operational and financial processes. Comments from district staff include:

- *"[Admin] decision process is collaborative and a lot of decisions day to day that just get made, but in bigger decisions, I have a lot more say in what decisions are made."*

- *"We have a lot. A budget process on a daily basis - is several months long. The goal of that is to get everyone's input. Administratively we have Monday morning meetings (5-6 of us) to share what's going on and coming up, bounce ideas, employee issues that come up - sharing ideas and getting feedback."*
- *"[Budgeting is a] collaborative process. We talk about different needs with directors and principals."*
- *"Administration [is] always very accommodating and trying to make things right... administration listens and tries to make that happen."*

Leaders and school committee members report positive working relationships and alignment on the need to further equity and inclusion. In focus groups and committee materials, school committee members articulate their roles as fulfilling governance functions and maintaining a focus on policy, not doing the work. Committee members express support for the Superintendent as the leader and face of the district and schools.

The MPS school committee website states:

"While the School Committee has budgetary and policy-making authority, the Superintendent is charged with the day-to-day administration and oversight of the Mansfield Public Schools.

Our purpose is to oversee the process and advocate for each of our students to give them the very best education possible. We are committed to excellence in education, while working within the strict boundaries which frame public education. We are proud of our students, schools, and those who work with us to educate and inspire our children."

School committee members and the Superintendent describe working well together, focusing their time on district goals and needs. In particular, school committee members and district leadership expressed mutual support for the equity audit process and MPS' effort to further meet the needs of all students. Notable comments include:

- *"One of the biggest things is to engage in the equity audit. We look at policy, and we have ensured that certain policies are in place. We look carefully at policies around disabilities. Ensuring that there is equitable access in classes and buildings for people with disabilities. Making sure policies are appropriate for everyone. The biggest thing is the engagement and pushing of the equity audit."*
- *"Conversations around the audit are that this is amazing work, but what happens next? We need a real solid plan to move things forward. To ensure that there are programs in place to support all of our students and meet everybody where they are."*

Leaders continue to develop an orientation of equity. There are starting efforts to examine and address inequities, yet policies, practices, and resources can be improved to be fully inclusive and equitable for students and staff.

Leaders and staff share multiple examples of policy revisions and initial efforts MPS has undertaken in the past few years to address inequities. Over the past two to three years, MPS has increasingly prioritized equity in policies and plans. The MPS school committee, with guidance from the [Massachusetts Association of School Committees](#) (MASC), adopted educational equity policy JBB in September 2020, which defines educational equity "as providing all students, as reasonably practical, the high-quality instruction and support they need to reach and exceed a common standard." This policy also states that the district will "Provide multiple pathways to success in order to meet the needs of the diverse student body and actively encourage, support and expect high academic achievement for each student" and names the role of the Superintendent in ensuring equity practices are incorporated into the district's strategic plan, goals, and improvement strategies. These policy statements provide an operational definition of equity; though, as

described in Domains 1 and 2, there are still multiple varied understandings of what equity means in and for MPS. Additionally, the policy seems to include an equity qualifier: “as reasonably practical.” Without further definition, this leaves the *why, when, and how* of guaranteed equity in MPS open to interpretation.

District leaders pointed to the state-required Student Opportunity Act Plan as an essential step in helping the district focus its attention on marginalized populations. Additionally, many stakeholders describe that the pandemic led to a greater focus on meeting student and family needs, though the work has been slow. In support of these collective efforts, the school committee voted to approve an equity audit and planning process to ensure that a system-wide understanding informs efforts to improve strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to equity and inclusion. School committee members, leaders, and staff shared multiple examples of efforts to make policies more inclusive, particularly policies pertaining to cultural and religious holidays, gender identities, and support for low-income families.

Improving student and family access to buildings, learning programs, and opportunities:

- *“We ensured that there were more ramps to get into the school that was more easily accessible. That the elevators work.”*
- *“Free and reduced [recipients] do not pay for transportation... Not worried if students do not have the ability to pay. Our number one goal for transportation is to get students to school safely.”*
- *“One thing we did was 1:1 with Chromebooks - technology strands support.”*
- *“School choice - we discussed at the school committee that if we want to maintain programs, we need to retain and increase students. I want to vote for school choice, and we have some space in HS. The most effective way, I believe, is school choice. Might also help diversify our schools.”*

Increasing inclusion (e.g., cultural, religious, and gender inclusivity):

- *“We have a no tolerance policy about name-calling, bullying. We, as a school committee, have worked very hard with each school with regard to their student handbooks to make sure the language is appropriate. We have taken out ‘she’ and ‘he’ is a lot of communication. Everything now is gender-neutral. We have talked about well-being programs that focus on a wide range of issues. We have tried to expand the scope in a lot of different ways.”*
- *“Committee decided we aren't closing for Jewish or Christian holidays (like Good Friday). It is at least consistent even if we get pushback. We stand by this.”*
- *“We have more Muslim and Indian families celebrating Diwali. There are different faiths in town. We are getting people not to schedule MCAS on these holidays. I have drilled this into the main offices. It is that cultural awareness as well. The world is bigger than Mansfield.”*

Supporting students and families in need:

- *“When we had the meals going home, we provided meals for seven days a week, but that went away when we came back last year; our participation in breakfast and lunch is way up; we thought there was a stigma with breakfast at the HS, this program has helped.”*
- *“McLean [Hospital] partnership came out of the Student Opportunity Act. English learners [support] is in here as well. This is front and center too. I give props to the administration because they are focused on student subgroups - we've added staffing too.”*

While district leaders and the school committee have taken steps to understand the experiences of marginalized populations, leaders are still developing an orientation of equity and comfort with leading through a data-driven equity lens. Many leaders openly describe that intentional diversity, equity, and inclusion work is new, challenging, and pushes their comfort zones/status quo. It is not yet evident that there is a coherent, system-wide orientation of equity that prioritizes the success of marginalized populations in establishing goals, making decisions, and collaboratively organizing support for schools. Some leaders even describe being uncomfortable with and/or unsure of how and when to discuss

individual student subgroup data and share that they don't know what the current district needs and gaps are. See Domain 8: Data for additional related findings. Leaders and school committee members shared:

- *"The next step is getting an understanding of who we are and exactly what our challenges are, so we aren't throwing darts. Get a true understanding of who we are and where we are going. Not invent problems we don't have."*
- *"Really hoping to understand where we are now, what our demographics are. Not saying we are targeting our recruitment in any way because I hire the best person for the job. But maybe we look elsewhere... I don't have that information, so I don't know how to target my efforts."*

Some staff also share that the administration's support in navigating issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion is inconsistent.

- *"I think there is the perception that we don't know that the administration will have our backs. Sometimes they cave quickly to parent concerns. They will say they agree, but they don't want their parents upset. If we are doing these things, we need to know they have our backs."*
- *"Gender and sexuality are always on the forefront of my mind. In terms of culture, the school pushes back on that. When you start getting into SES differences and BIPOC, they are not quite ready to get on board with that type of curriculum. It is a real challenge."*

There are clear examples of how the district allocates resources and grants funds in alignment with strategic priorities and to meet student needs. Though, there are not yet defined and commonly implemented criteria or practices to apply an equity lens to resource and budget decisions. General resources are typically allocated evenly. There are also mixed levels of investment in pursuing equitable rather than resourcing strategies.

The school committee policy for Education Equity (JBB) states, "The School Committee's goal is to strive to address the needs of every student in each of our schools, **subject to budgetary, space, and other limitations**. There is an opportunity to consider and clarify examples of budgetary limitations that would impede MPS' ability to provide equitable services and an opportunity for MPS to proactively identify strategies to mitigate those barriers. A shared language and lens through which to consider equity in budget and resource allocation can make decision-making easier while also providing transparency and clarity for those involved and/or impacted by decisions.

The Proposed FY23 District Budget² includes a 1.89% increase from the FY22 budget, with specific allocations for using ESSER III/American Rescue Plan Act funds to meet strategic needs. For example, the proposed budget includes allocations for strategic staffing, including reading and math interventionists, psychologists, and Bridge Program staff, as well as student services, such as social-emotional evaluations. The consolidated budget spreadsheet also lists funds for special education programming as a stand-alone line item, signaling this to be a priority in district resourcing. The public-facing budget does not include a similar line item to show investment in programming to support English language learners.

Grant funds allow for more focused attention on marginalized and high-need populations, while general resources are typically allocated evenly. As described in Domain 1, the Student Opportunity Act Plan outlines a number of investments and actions to address student gaps and needs. Stakeholders report that general resources are allocated equally or evenly across schools and programs, but there are efforts to seek and leverage grant funds to address equity needs. District leaders and central office departments share a belief that in most cases, student needs are evenly distributed across schools and, therefore, schools generally receive even resources. However, leaders did not discuss district-wide systems and criteria for using measurable data to examine potential needs through an equity lens. It is also unclear if there is a shared interest and investment in pursuing equitable, rather than even, resourcing strategies beyond pursuing grants.

²https://www.mansfieldschools.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_1015762/File/Mansfield%20School%20District/About/FY2023%20Budget%20Sub%20Presentation%204-26-22%20Public%20Hearing.pdf

Leaders and staff shared:

- *"We allocate certain grants to schools evenly. We don't have neighborhood elementary schools; they are all on the same street like a large campus. When we doll out resources, we try to disperse it as evenly as possible. I don't think marginalized [students] are in any one school. As we get further down the road and we build a strategic plan, we will get better at allocating resources to marginalized groups. The state mandating a plan for marginalized groups was helpful... our district [they] didn't have me wait until the grant came through to spend money on those things."*
- *"I don't believe there is any process we have to identify groups or subgroups in the budget."*
- *"Subgroups are given high priority through grants."*
- *"Most recent grant - math acceleration academies - was a state-funded grant for remediation support. Look at students with the most need."*
- *"Last year, we ran summer school programs (grant funded). We didn't want this to be a barrier, so last summer, we didn't charge anyone. Thinking of that for this year too."*

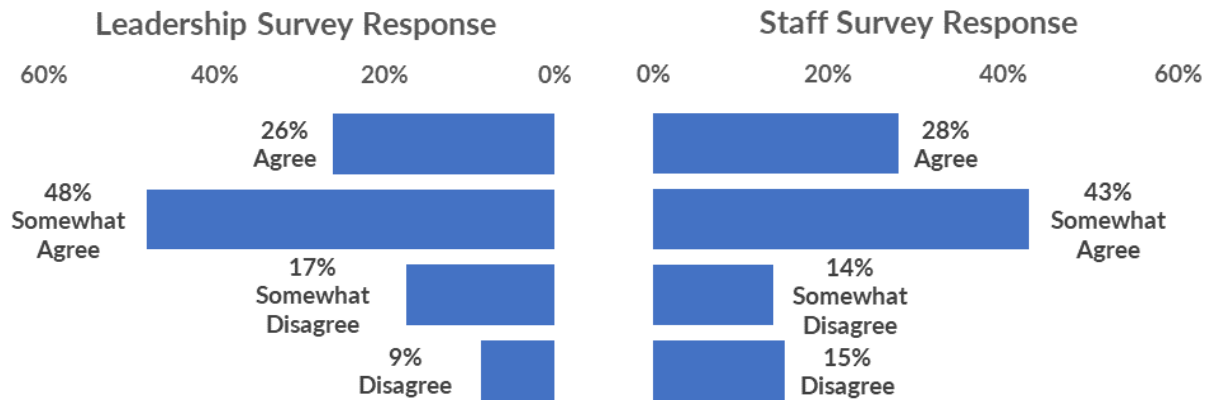
The district charges fees for some services and activities, such as the pay and ride system. MPS also establishes policies to minimize financial and other access barriers for families and students. One staff member shared: *"We have a pay and ride system- less than two miles [from school], there is a charge; more than two miles [from school], there is no charge until 7th grade."* Policy JQ states, "The School Committee recognizes the need for student fees to fund certain school activities. It also recognizes that some students may not be able to pay these fees. No student will be denied access into any program because of inability to pay these supplementary charges." Policy EF-EFC states, "no child who a teacher believes is improperly nourished will be denied free and reduced-price meals, other food, and/or milk as needed simply because the proper application has not been received from his/her parents or guardians."

Staff and leaders also share that the district makes an effort to systematize and sustain budget needs over time. There is recognition of the need to move long-term needs to the general budget. For example, one central staff member shared, *"Last few years we have been fortunate with grant funding coming in, but grant funding will go away, and if we want to maintain, we will need to fund through the general budget. E.g., we added interventionists to help students through the pandemics -- and we have been proactive in stating to the town we need to maintain these positions long-term. The town has been supportive."* Another leader shared an example of securing more stable and sustainable funds to support student programming: *"A few years ago at the high school, we had a bridge program to welcome students back after an illness, presented by the admin and guidance team. We highlighted it in our meeting, and it was initially grant funded, but now it is being maintained in the operating budget."*

While the district has some equity policies and practices in place, there is a need to ensure that those responsible for implementing policy have a shared understanding of what that means in practice and that policies are implemented with fidelity. As MPS builds from foundational starting points, it will be important to regularly assess and improve policies, resourcing, and implementation in practice.

Multiple stakeholders believe there are policies and efforts that don't yet meet the needs of all and agree that "There is a need to re-examine district policies, systems, and structures to ensure they equitably support the success of all students, particularly those from marginalized populations." Leadership and staff survey responses to the corresponding survey question are on the following page. Students, families, and staff report a number of policies and practices that may not be fully inclusive for students as outlined and/or as implemented. The most frequent leadership and staff responses about what policies should be re-examined to support all students include curriculum, behavior, and discipline policies and practices, individualized student support, and equitable access to advanced coursework. Additional areas include parent/community communication and resources, data training, and special education policies.

Figure V: Leadership and staff survey responses



Curriculum and Instruction: Stakeholders consistently raised the need for culturally relevant curriculum and instructional practices. These topics are discussed further in Domains 4 and 5. Comments from stakeholders include:

- Student: *"I don't think there is enough curriculum built around others' cultures; even doing a short-term workshop on inclusion would be beneficial, in my opinion. (I HIGHLY recommend the Playbook Initiative workshop, a partnership between the Celtics and Project 351. The workshop focuses on inclusion regarding race, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, and more. I have attended this, and it is extremely eye-opening and inspiring.)"*
- Student: *"I think to better improve my educational experience, the school could standardize classes that have the same level of difficulty. For example, I know that for classes with different teachers, some teachers grade much harder than others, which I feel is not always fair to the students and somewhat stressful. I think that by standardizing the curriculum in a more effective way, it would be more helpful knowing that others are on the same journey as me, especially when I am struggling."*
- Family member: *"Honestly, the middle school ELA curriculum, in general, is incredibly outdated. It could do a better job of exposing students to a diverse range of voices, especially more contemporary ones."*
- Staff: *"For the most part, the curriculum is what needs to be re-examined. Marginalized populations do not see themselves reflected positively throughout the curriculum. It is only during special months (i.e., Black History Month, AAPI History Month, Latino/a History Month) that students can see themselves reflected in the things they are learning."*
- Staff: *"I think that as departments, we need to think about how to make some lessons/units that relate to inclusiveness, equity, gender, etc. I think that it is great that health teachers work on this, but if everyone does/reinforces the previous topics a little, the message will be loud and clear about the importance of them."*

Behavior and Discipline Policies and Practices: The current policies for student discipline (JIC) and student conduct (JK) give authority and responsibility to the school principal to define the general rules of student conduct and prohibited actions/behaviors in students' handbooks. The district-wide policies outline procedures for disciplinary actions such as suspensions and expulsions and require principals to "consider ways to re-engage the student in learning and avoid using long-term suspension from school as a consequence until alternatives have been tried. Alternatives may include the use of evidence-based strategies and programs such as mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and positive behavioral interventions and supports."

The school committee also approved a policy for Bullying Prevention and Intervention (JICFB) and a subsequent Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (JICFB-R) to provide "protection for ALL students regardless of their status under the law." The policy further states that "The District recognizes certain students may be more vulnerable to become targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or

perceived characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, limited English proficiency, sexual orientation, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics.” The plan is available in five languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, Portuguese, and Spanish.

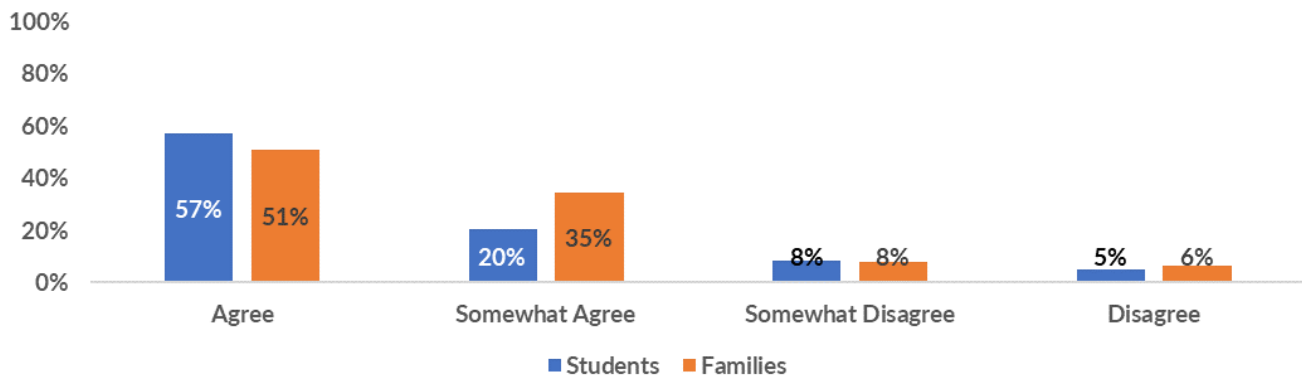
However, despite policies to support a positive and inclusive environment, stakeholders continue to raise disproportionality in behavior and discipline data as an area of concern and report that bullying persists, particularly for students who identify as LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC. It is unclear how school leaders and staff consistently use data to ensure effective and aligned implementation of behavioral interventions and procedures. Additional information on student culture is covered in Domain 5. Notable stakeholder feedback is below:

- Student: *“address bullying (not just saying don’t do it, it’s bad)- listen when students come forth with complain[t]s and consider acting upon it.”*
- Student: *“Be more inclusive, better demonstrate how to report acts of discrimination, be more inclusive, inform the students of what microaggressions are and why it is so annoying for minorities to deal with them.”*
- Family member: *“Better control of the unacceptable behavior, especially the smoking and vaping in the bathrooms.”*
- Family member: *“They should work hard on fighting discrimination and unconscious biases when staff treats minority children”*
- Staff: *“I think if students of a particular group are compromising, a significant portion of those who are being called out for tardiness, absenteeism or struggling with academics, then there needs to be something in place to investigate ways to change this.”*
- Leader: *“Discipline data, as well as other data sources, should be reviewed to ensure equity for all students.”*

Student and family survey responses show that while over half agree that **“Behavior policies and practices are positive and fair, no matter the race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, language, immigration status, or the ability of the student,”** perceptions still vary.

Figure W: Student and family responses

Behavior policies and practices are positive and fair, no matter the race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, language, immigration status, or ability of the student



*There were two versions of the question. Students responded to "My school addresses behavior issues in a positive and fair way, no matter the race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, immigration status, or ability of the student. Families responded to "Behavior policies and practices are positive and fair, no matter the race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, language, immigration status, or ability of the student.

Postsecondary Readiness and Access to Advanced Coursework: Research shows that when students have opportunities to engage in challenging coursework, student achievement improves. TNTP's *The Opportunity Myth*³ reveals that "When students did have the chance to work on the content that was appropriate for their grade, they rose to the occasion more often than not.... In classrooms where students had greater access to grade-appropriate assignments, they gained nearly two months of additional learning compared to their peers." The report also reinforces that the lack of access to rigorous coursework "isn't random. It's the result of choices adults make at every level of our educational system." Staff mindsets, beliefs, and practices can impact student access to advanced and even grade-level opportunities.

Currently, the MHS Student Handbook lists four levels of coursework: comprehensive, college preparatory, honors, and Advanced Placement (AP). According to the handbook, teachers make recommendations for student coursework, and "Families are strongly encouraged to follow the recommendations of teachers as to course placement for the coming year." The handbook also states: "Knowing prerequisites and expectations early in a student's high school career (grade 10) is highly recommended" and "You are urged to review the AP Profile as outlined by each academic discipline." As a result, teachers have a strong influence over student access to coursework, and the burden is placed on families to seek out appropriate information regarding access to advanced coursework. It is important to pair written guidance with other forms of communication and support to ensure all students and families are aware of opportunities and any prerequisites. It is also important to ensure that school staff consistently operate within commonly defined best practices for student course placement and advancement, use data to regularly assess and remedy gaps in student access to these opportunities, and engage in ongoing reflection and learning to mitigate the potential for biases to impact students' access.

Students, families, and staff report the need for more advanced opportunities, more options that prepare students for careers, and a deeper review of the practice for student placement and course leveling.

- Student: *"Provide me with the support I need when I advocate for them. Maybe let more kids with IEPs take honors and AP classes. Disinterest created by underestimation of their ability is what has granted this district with a 63% graduation rate for students with IEPs. I had to appeal my way into the classes I*

³ TNTP. (2018). *The Opportunity Myth: What Students Can Show Us About How School Is Letting Them Down—and How to Fix It*. https://tntp.org/assets/documents/TNTP_The-Opportunity-Myth_Web.pdf

belonged in. It shouldn't be that way."

- Student: *"Create more opportunities for students to study different subjects; for example, create more elective classes similar to college majors."*
- Student: *"I would like them to have more advanced levels in certain subjects for people who are ahead of other people in school."*
- Family member: *"More advanced courses, science and arts projects, Robotics and modern learning opportunities, community projects, etc."*
- Leader: *"We need to look at how we recommend students to advanced courses and what we require to place students in these courses. We also need to evaluate how we use differentiation as opposed to course leveling."*
- Staff: *"We claim to be a comprehensive high school; however, we only offer a college preparatory curriculum to students. Students should be encouraged and supported to find opportunities that are not only related to college if there are fields of interest. That would include having different elective and academic courses to match needs and goals – beyond those that satisfy state requirements."*

Individualized Student Support Policies and Practices: Stakeholders also named a desire for policies and practices that provide greater support for all students. Students asked for support periods and more avenues to seek help. Families and staff shared similar sentiments, naming that there is a need to clarify and improve systems of student support, as well as to ensure staff is equipped to meet a variety of student needs. As the district strives to improve equity and access for all students, there is an opportunity to define what systems of support look like and entail and to support teachers and staff with the conditions, training, and support they need to effectively differentiate for students and tier supports.

- Student: *"I would like my school to have a free period where we can do homework, get extra help from teachers and talk with our classmates."*
- Student: *"I would like more help; the school has pushed many people away because they don't fit the standards of needing help. students should be allowed help if they need it, especially if students are asking for help."*
- Family member: *"Often basic classroom practices make it difficult for students with accommodations. For example, bonus points for turning something in early when there are students in the room who require extra time make it difficult to participate. Telling the whole class that only kids with a 504/IEP get extra time makes it obvious who the kids are."*
- Staff: *"I think our students would benefit from a consistent support class – the majority of students report a need for time and extra help, but we have limited options to address needs for students not on a plan."*
- Staff: *"We also need to look at the amount of time we are giving specific students. Sometimes, when we give one student what they need, we don't have time left to give the other students what they need."*

DOMAIN 4: FOCUS ON CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY SUSTAINING TEACHING & LEARNING

Focus on Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Teaching and Learning: Curriculum, materials, instructional practices, and learning environments ensure school leaders, teachers, and other school staff constantly improve and refine rigorous standards-based pedagogy that recognizes and embraces students' identities and the district's diversity.

The district has provided cultural proficiency training for all faculty and staff. Staff express a need and desire for ongoing and sustained professional development around building cultural proficiency.

Faculty, staff, and leaders recognize a gap in knowledge in cultural proficiency, and many desire the opportunity to become more culturally proficient and equity conscious as a district and to expand the curriculum to include information and experiences on diverse cultures and identities. Also, there are additional areas of professional learning interests such as, social-emotional learning, trauma-informed practices, and others that could prove beneficial to all members of the district staff. The district provided a few sessions of cultural proficiency training with Dr. Kalise Wornum, CEO of KW Diversity, Inc., during the 21-22 school year, as well as training from Dr. Adolph Brown, Founder, President, and CEO of the Leadership and Learning Institute. While staff acknowledge the benefit of cultural proficiency training, they desire more of this type of training and other types of professional learning to adequately meet the needs of all students. Also, it is important to give consideration to not only offering various types of professional learning but also various modes of delivery. Staff stated:

- *"We have had the training and working with a cultural responsiveness partner. Just having conversations. I have started to see movement. Not everything I want to see. I know with a lot of the backlash, my teachers are afraid to tackle these things."*
- *"Teachers are getting backlash from people. There is a fear level on top of it."*
- *"I think we need more in-depth training in the area of social-emotional learning and trauma-informed practice."*
- *"We've all had SPED instruction classes with our master's degrees, but most have not had DEI training."*
- *"With Mansfield lacking diversity in a variety of areas as a whole, I think it would be helpful to provide equity training to the students, staff, and community."*
- *"I would definitely like to engage in more professional development surrounding equity, diversity, inclusive practices, etc."*
- *"Teachers could use more training when it comes to teaching students with special needs and/or emotional issues. We also need more diversity training."*
- *"Our students in the LGBTQIA+ community often fear coming out in our community. We have no professional development on this stuff. And if we do, it is often a one-and-done. And the people they bring in are not what we need. One consultant gave a canned speech, which was inspirational but had nothing to do with unpacking implicit bias. I know we are just starting this journey, but we can do better. It is 2022."*

On the survey, staff expressed the areas that they desire professional learning. The professional learning desires of the staff are displayed in Figure A.

Figure X: Professional learning desires by staff.



Providing stronger, on-going support and professional learning for teachers is vital for a culturally and linguistically inclusive environment. Although many staff welcome and recognize the need, the desire is not universal. Some staff members who are aware that the entire district is not on board with the Equity Audit and cultural proficiency training stated, *“the new professional developments are a great start, now we need all staff to buy in. Support of diverse students needs to be policy, not suggestion.”* With this in mind, this is an area for the district to derive a strategy to move forward with providing opportunities for additional professional learning for staff.

There is evidence of attempts to become more inclusive, but the district has not yet fully embraced and required diversity in the curricular materials and instructional practices.

Culturally and linguistically sustaining teaching and learning is vital for the success of all students in general and marginalized students in particular. The majority of the curriculum is focused on or relevant to the mainstream culture in the district. There is limited evidence of diversity in the curriculum and lessons being a part of the district culture; Teachers need and desire formal training on planning culturally responsive and inclusive lessons. A method for ensuring culturally and linguistically sustaining teaching and learning is to embrace diversity in curricular materials and instructional practices. Some leaders and staff desire to become more inclusive and diverse with the curriculum and update the existing resources and curriculum supplements. The district is aware of the concerns around curriculum, materials, and instructional practices, including equity, and even welcomes the addition of a diverse curriculum and materials. The district and staff believe that funding is available for changes and modifications to the curriculum and materials. Some staff gave their position on the attempts thus far on reviewing and revising the curriculum and materials, as well as future curricular needs:

- *“I would give them a grade of C. It is a district goal, and there is financial support. I was on a committee where we looked at the curriculum. We looked at including other texts and points of view. In terms of it being an entire culture, it is not here.”*
- *“Our curriculum materials at all levels need to be reviewed to ensure they equitably support all students.”*
- *“The district is willing to purchase and provide the resources that are needed to fully educate ESL*

students. However, at the present time, the curriculum is not fully developed and established. In addition, there is not an assigned time or formal meeting for general education and SPED teachers to plan and strategize ways to increase the success of ESL students in the district.”

- “For the most part, the curriculum is what needs to be re-examined. Marginalized populations do not see themselves reflected positively throughout the curriculum. It is only during special months (i.e., Black History Month, AAPI History Month, Latino/a History Month) that students can see themselves reflected in the things they are learning.”
- “District curriculum should evolve to include more diverse authors and topics, particularly in the English dept. - Students of different racial backgrounds have reported not feeling safe or equal.”

A staff member who is fully aware of the heavy lift and commitment that curricular changes or modifications may warrant stated: *“Producing and implementing a truly equitable curriculum requires time that we have never been given.”*

As illustrated above, many faculty members requested to make the curriculum more diverse and inclusive. However, the majority of instructional staff, approximately 83%, believe that the curriculum and instructional practices, curricula, and materials represent student cultures and ethnicities. The staff survey results revealed that:

- 98% of instructional staff agreed that their instructional practices are responsive to and inclusive of students’ race, culture, and diversity.
- 83% of instructional staff agree that curricula, materials, and resources provided by the school are responsive to and inclusive of race, ethnicity, culture, sexual identity, gender identity, immigration status, economic status, religion, ability, and experiences of Mansfield students.

In addition, the majority of the instructional staff stated that they are comfortable with culturally sustaining and responsive teaching, yet, the desire for more professional learning in these areas was salient. Staff also desire autonomy and flexibility to supplement their curricula with resources that are more reflective and inclusive of their students. The survey results showed that:

- 95% of instructional staff agree that they have the flexibility to supplement required curricula, materials, and resources with additional materials to reflect the race, cultures, and diversity of the students in their classrooms.
- 91% of instructional staff are comfortable teaching a culturally relevant and responsive curriculum.

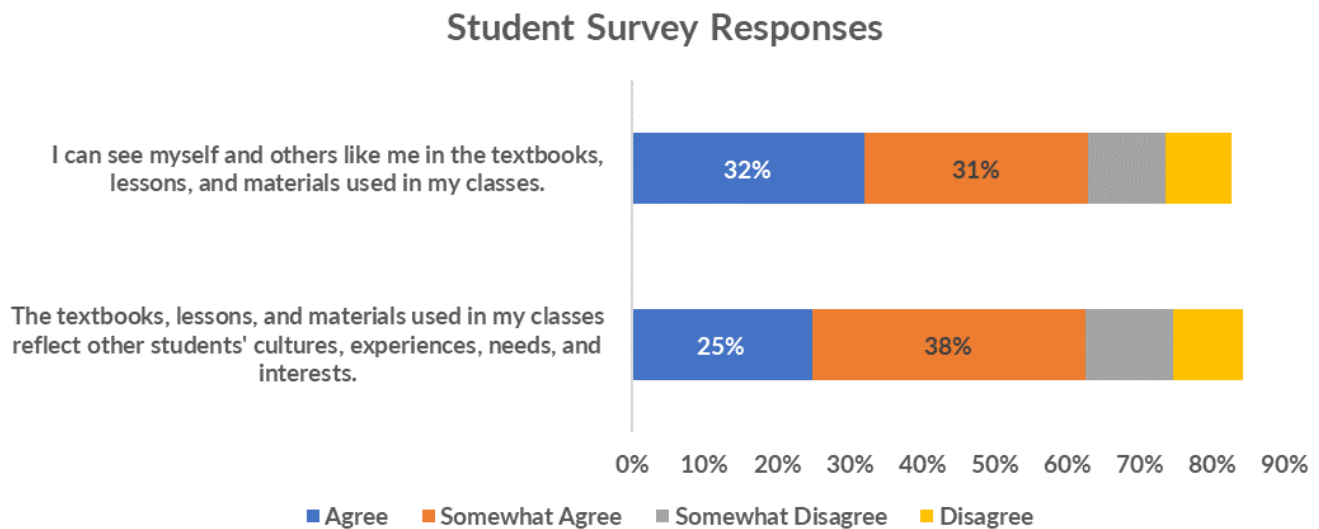
Some faculty believe that they make conscientious efforts to make curricular materials inclusive. However, one of the concerns is stakeholder pushback on shifting from the generalized, mainstream curriculum to a more inclusive one. Staff stated: *“There is a fear among staff about how situations will be presented by families on social media that may negatively reflect on the school or individual teacher. Some decisions in the classroom are based upon this. I am wondering how the district can support staff with this. It is difficult to choose a diverse curriculum and have conversations with students about this subject matter when there is fear of public reprisal.”* Likewise, the leadership stated: *“Teachers are getting backlash from people. There is a fear level on top of it.”*

Some staff and leaders feel that this is not an area needing improvement and that the curriculum and resources are sufficient and suitable for all student populations. In essence, some believe that what best serves the mainstream student population best serves the needs of all students. This is an area for a more in-depth examination as MPS moves forward in its equity journey.

When soliciting responses on this concept from students on the survey, many felt that their culture and identity are included in the lessons and curricular materials. It was also noted that not all students felt that there was full inclusion of their culture and experiences in the textbooks and lessons. Student survey responses are below, which indicate that more than half of students have positive perceptions about

curricular representation, but many students do not fully see themselves in connection with the materials used in teaching and learning in the district.

Figure Y: Student responses to curricular materials



Overall, staff indicate that they are in a good place with including the culture, identities, and experiences of students, even though they desire professional learning in this area, which has the potential to be interpreted contradictorily. Additional data were collected on this topic in the student focus groups. When students were asked if their culture and identity were included in the curriculum and pedagogy, there seemed to be a difference of opinion in some cases. Students in the general student focus group stated:

- *"They don't."*
- *"Barely see other cultures."*
- *"I have not had anything connected to me."*
- *"Oftentimes, they don't, in my experience. They really don't."*
- *"I don't think they do."*
- *"Since I'm mostly Irish, the teacher started doing stuff, more Irish-related stuff. It relates to my family."*
- *"The assignments don't include culture unless it's in Civics or Social Studies class."*
- *"I don't think there is enough curriculum built around others' cultures; even doing a short-term workshop on inclusion would be beneficial, in my opinion. (I HIGHLY recommend the Playbook Initiative workshop, a partnership between the Celtics and Project 351. The workshop focuses on inclusion regarding race, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, and more. I have attended this, and it is extremely eye-opening and inspiring)."*

However, when groups of students were asked if the culture and identity of their classmates were included in the curriculum, students from the marginalized focus group stated: *"Well, their identity, in the book. They are all white, so yeah."*

The focus groups and surveys also presented cultural and identity inclusiveness to families/caregivers. Some families feel that some inclusiveness efforts have not been at full capacity or may have even happened as an afterthought. Caregivers/parents stated:

- *"MPS is inclusive when a worldwide event is happening. They will not take a stance (bullying, LGBTQ). They will only send an email if parents complain. They started Black History Month events that happened a week later. This happened because a parent emailed. They just did a morning announcement one time."*

- *“Honestly, the middle school ELA curriculum, in general, is incredibly outdated. It could better expose students to a diverse range of voices, especially more contemporary ones.”*

Some faculty and staff feel equipped to provide a culturally sustaining, responsive, and inclusive education for all students. However, there is a wide request for professional learning around diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural proficiency. This is a discrepancy between whether this practice is in effect and whether teachers are prepared or need training before being able to fully implement this practice. Not all students experience this in practice yet, as evidenced by student gaps described in Domain 2 and throughout this domain. In some cases, it may be fear and, in other cases, a need for further education; staff reported a mix of the two. Considering both scenarios, the inclusive curriculum topic should be revisited and addressed appropriately.

Special Education programming is in a season of improvement. The district has made it a focus, and much effort has been spent on improving the teaching and learning experience of students requiring an IEP or 504 Plan, as well as ramping up training to ensure a variety of needs of students with disabilities are met. The district provided special education training during the summer of 2021 as a part of the school improvement plan. There is also documentation that the district hired consultants to provide teacher and classroom support. It has been noted that *“The district contracts with high-quality consultants for both in-classroom consultation, as well as for evaluative purposes.”* It was also stated: *“We have strong special education programs that normalize the students who have physical, emotional and mental differences- best buddies, Special Olympics, opportunities for students to do jobs within the school, etc.”*

The district has made some solid decisions regarding school improvement, with particular emphasis on special education. However, it has been noted that there is still a great need for more preparation and concerted effort toward improving the school experience for those who require special education. Staff indicated:

- *“To ensure the success of all students, there need to be more interventionists to support the historically needier and lower performing students. Many of those students tend to be in the SPED population, in addition to minority students or students of low income. Sometimes it's not enough between the general education and special education teachers to reach these students.”*
- *“With so many students on IEPs, 504s, and struggling socially and emotionally, we need more training with practical, tangible practices and measurable outcomes. We need a more streamlined and team approach for struggling students than emails or calling home, or talking to guidance. RTI referrals lack follow-up, a plan, or monitorable outcome.”*

Some families/caregivers feel that their experience has been positive in the district and that the needs of their child/children are being met. Others agree that the support is sufficient, but the step-down method where there is a gradual release of support needs to be improved. In essence, some report that support was terminated too early or abruptly, instead of partially removing support over time. Families stated:

- *“Very positive and inclusive, I know a lot of kids with learning challenges, and that can be frustrating. She has a positive experience every day. She loves going to classes. The only challenge is when you are trying to participate in class, the raising of the hand and getting called on. Her executive functioning is put on the spot. They are trying to be inclusive, but sometimes that can be difficult. All in all, she feels very included.”*
- *“Are there ways to like not to be so traumatic through this process and not have the rug pulled from underneath her? If there is a different step-down approach and not whipping the support away?”*

Seeing that the district has taken accountability and made concrete steps toward improving special education is encouraging. To continue on this path, a re-examination of the gradual release process and ensuring that all students requiring accommodations receive the full scope of necessary support is warranted.

An area of need for greater inclusivity for Mansfield as a community and school district is the inclusion of the LGBTQIA+ population.

Also, it was stated by MPS staff that Mansfield as a community is very standardized. With that said, individuals who fall outside the norm or standard may experience negative consequences. Students and staff provided feedback on the desire to be accepted for who they are and not experience pushback or ostracization due to how they identify themselves. When asked if they felt comfortable being their true selves, students stated:

- *"I can be my true self, but in certain classrooms, I do not feel welcomed there. I can be my true self but can't be welcomed in class. One teacher doesn't like me and a few others, so I don't feel welcome."*
- *"There is one group of friends that don't feel included, and he is bullied for being a part of the LGBTQIA community. He reported to a staff member- unsure of the outcome."*
- *"I identify as two genders: he/her and they/them. Some people just don't like me because of that reason. Some people know without me telling them."*

Another student expressed interest in learning more about the LGBTQIA+ community. The student believes that there are no teachers who identify with the LGBTQIA+ community and that it is not normalized in the district, but there is evidence to the contrary. Other students express concerns about some of their experiences. They stated:

- *"More inclusion in topics such as LGBTQIA+ material. We never talk about LGBTQIA; there are no teachers with that, so we don't normalize it."*
- *"At the middle school, we have one bathroom that has been designated as the gender-neutral bathroom at the front of the school, so if a student wants to use the bathroom, they'll have to go downstairs to the front. Whereas another student can just go around the corner. I know there are standards of where they have to be, but there could be another bathroom so students don't have to take so much time of their day."*

A staff member also expressed concern about students' experience in the Gay-Straight Alliance. The biggest concern is students not feeling a part of the student body overall but a part of a group that is considered "other" or outside of the norm. The staff member stated:

- *"We have GSA [Gay-Straight Alliance]. I have noticed in observing our students that when there is an announcement of that group. I get reactions of "others." It is not neutral ground. To go to the group is stamping oneself as others. I wonder what we could put in place for them, even if going to the affinity group doesn't feel safe. It puts you in the category of others and not in a positive way. What are some of the options we can do? We need to set some of our PD aside to deal with these types of things."*
- *"This isn't for me, but I want teachers to be open to talking about LGBTQIA+, even if it leads to conversations about sex."*

Because the LGBTQIA+ community is gaining momentum and not an "other" group, school districts must move in the same direction. Students' experiences, regardless of how they identify themselves, should be one of acceptance, inclusion, and value. Ensuring that all students have access to a suitable and available lavatory regardless of race, gender or identification is a civil right that all students should have in school. Mansfield Public Schools has an obligation to ensure that this happens for all students.

The district has made some efforts at inclusivity during times such as Black and Hispanic History Month, but feedback from students, families, and staff indicates that the attempts were minor and there is an opportunity to improve. For example, there were posters and books present during Black History or Hispanic History Month, but there is no evidence of full inclusion and diversity being a part of the district culture. However, the district has made a positive effort to address bullying and bias by student participation in an organization called, A World of Difference. There is A World of Difference Club at the high school level, which is a great attempt at inclusivity. A World of Difference is a program from the Anti-Defamation League that provides anti-bias training and prepares students to be peer anti-bias and anti-bullying facilitators. With this in mind, many students and staff have expressed the need for further growth in the district around diversity, equity, and inclusion as a whole. Staff stated that:

- *"Students of color are not part of the larger school culture. Spirit week is white privilege week."*
- *"I want to see a bunch of students from all races and more teachers educating students about real diversity."*
- *"Explore teaching about more cultures--it takes time, but there used to be some reluctance to teach about certain cultures...then I noticed less and less reluctance in those initially expected cultures but more reluctance in different cultures. For example, I used to notice resistance to teaching about Jewish culture but have noticed less resistance to that now. But still, notice a reluctance to teach about African American cultures and holidays."*
- *"The district needs to do a better job of acknowledging and celebrating diverse holidays and months, hiring Black staff, and providing training to help staff identify their own biases as well as biases in the curriculum in order to provide culturally relevant education that benefits ALL."*
- *"We really need to dig into understanding other cultures. Our students who celebrate Diwali come to school when they would normally be off for school, and other students are perceived to be "too loud" when maybe it is in their culture to be vivacious and vibrant and not so Puritanical. We need to learn more about the ins and outs of other cultures, which is beyond acceptance. Acceptance can be one-sided. We need to move toward experiencing other cultures, which gets us closer to understanding and appreciating other cultures."*
- *"We have teachers who still do Easter and St. Patrick's Day. Other teachers give tests over the Jewish holidays."*

Families weighed in on this important topic and stated:

- *"It is hard for me to know if the school sends out culturally relevant materials to families of a different culture or who speak another language. For elementary school, most of the communication is through newsletters written in English."*
- *"In past years, we would receive some evidence in the backpack of Black History month being discussed in school. This year nothing. It was like Black History month didn't exist. It is possible you might have talked about it or had displayed it, but not a single thing came home in either of my children's backpacks. And yet, for "Read Across America" week, both of my children had items in the backpack with Dr. Seuss."*

Similarly, students voiced their experience at school with regards to cultural inclusion:

- *"Also, I feel there is a lack of representation of my culture - we learn about a select few types of cultures, and I have found that we only learn about them during holidays and if not that, then it is very eurocentric."*
- *"They can explain history a little bit more. Like during Black history month, we didn't learn anything at all. A teacher put up a poster of black authors."*

An area of investigation around inclusion is honoring various cultures' holidays and religious days. These days should be included in the school calendar, and students of these cultures should not be expected to participate in school or be marked absent or penalized for not attending school. Also, because the district is becoming more diverse and will participate in the School Choice Initiative this fall, which could potentially increase diversity, focusing on culturally and linguistically sustaining teaching and learning practices will be vital and necessary Mansfield Public Schools to truly reach a place where all stakeholders and members feel valued, important, appreciated, included, and welcomed. The School Committee has taken steps to make holiday policy more inclusive, and this is an area for MPS to continue to monitor and improve over time.

DOMAIN 5: STUDENT READINESS TO LEARN

Student Readiness to Learn: *The district and schools create safe, positive, and inclusive learning environments for all students. Students' non-academic needs are proactively addressed so they fully engage and succeed academically.*

Student experiences impact their readiness to learn. While many MPS students report high levels of belonging in school, students outside the mainstream demographic have reported negative experiences.

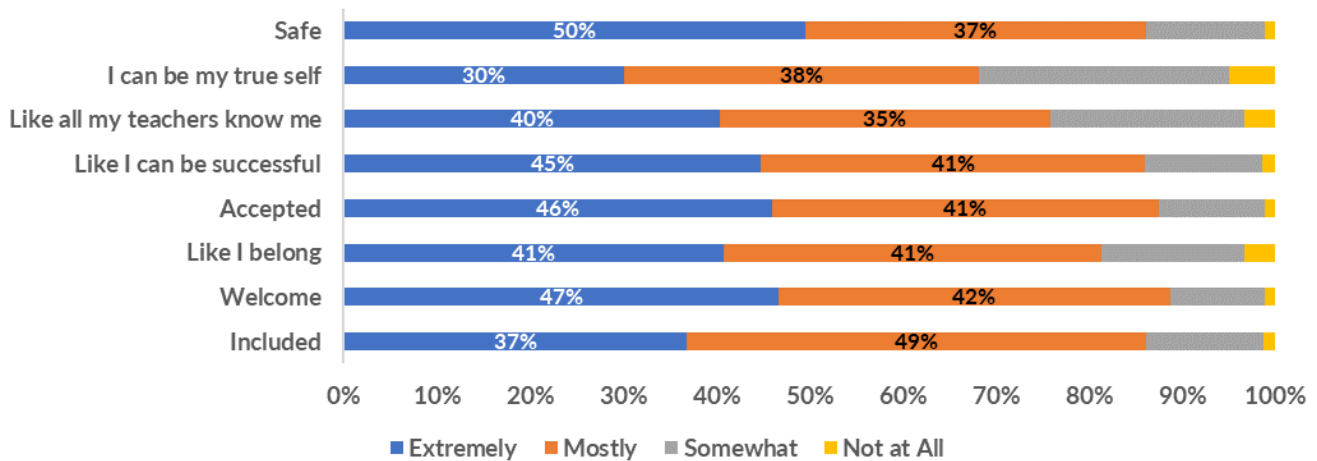
While many students stated in focus groups that they feel like they are welcomed and feel that they belong in school, when asked on the survey if they felt like they belonged in school, the results were less indicative of this opinion. Student experiences impact their readiness to learn. Some students' experiences have not been positive, which can have a lasting impact on their readiness to learn.

The district has a goal of having an inclusive environment. Some schools have customs and practices specifically to promote a climate of inclusivity and a sense of community. For example, it was noted that *"At the Jordan Jackson, PBIS helps foster a welcoming and positive environment for students. Also, I believe that the teachers try their best to provide a safe and inclusive culture in their classroom. Most classrooms hold morning meetings and/or open-circle. This provides a time for class team building and/or open discussion about specific topics. Most recently, the kindness trees that are all over the building definitely provide a positive vibe to the students and staff."* Also, Qualters Middle School faculty received professional development on the design and implementation of targeted language objects for the SEI classroom. In addition, at Mansfield High School, for the 21-22 school year, they had the goal of working with student leaders to support the development of cultural competency/student advocacy clubs.

However, the majority of staff and students that feel that the district environment is inclusive are mainstream and white. Students outside of the mainstream demographic have expressed discomfort. They have even claimed to have experienced traumatic encounters, such as being bullied for being Jewish and exposed to racial slurs. Students have even expressed not feeling comfortable reporting these incidents, which is a clear reason to examine the culture and climate of the district. In addition, some BIPOC families have experienced trauma due to incidents suffered by their children in school, such as being asked if someone can touch their hair.

While many students stated in focus groups that they feel like they are welcomed and feel that they belong in school when asked on the survey if they felt like they belonged in school, the results were less indicative of this opinion. The results are illustrated in Figure Z on the following page.

Figure Z: Student climate ratings from equity audit survey



In addition, some unnerving comments concerning trauma and negative experiences of students are below. It should be noted that the list below is extensive to illustrate the multiple experiences that some students experience at the hand of their peers. This reinforces that some students' experiences in school could impact their readiness to learn. Students shared:

- *"Sometimes, there is racism in school."*
- *"Sometimes, people do racist things as a joke."*
- *"A kid named @#\$%^ and a lot of people call him a monkey because he is black. I don't see any other black kids doing that to him, only white."*
- *"People need to stop saying things are 'racist' as a joke. They think it is fun to say that."*
- *"I was at lunch, and someone said they could say the 'N' word because their ex-best friend was black."*
- *"A lot of people said the 'N' word, and they are not black."*
- *"I was told that my hair is all fake. I don't have real hair about my braids."*
- *"One time, I was at lunch, and somebody made a joke about eating watermelon."*
- *"[some] said that they could say things racist towards black people because they were 1.12% Nigerian."*
- *"I got bullied for being Jewish."*
- *"Most people hate me for past mental health problems and never feel safe in the halls and hated by most students overall."*
- *"There are definitely problems in our school, and things could be better for inclusivity and safety. I feel included and safe."*
- *"I would like my school to talk more about racism and how it is unacceptable. Numerous times I've witnessed my classmates of color get made fun of and be told extremely racist remarks that the school hasn't handled properly."*
- *"I just wish the school would teach kids more about these mental disorders instead of demonizing them more and more and making kids think that it is only about trouble focusing."*
- *"For the most part, the staff is not the problem. Some might harbor prejudiced views, but very few or none act on them, in my experience at least. The problem is the students. This year, I have witnessed multiple acts of violence in the hall. Nothing too serious, but it should be addressed, and as for bigotry, it's a large problem in our school. I have had conversations with my trans, black and Muslim friends about poor treatment by many 'Conservative' students. As for homophobia, it's a flip of a coin. Most prejudices just come down to awkward questions and blatant paranoia. It's very rare to meet someone who genuinely hates homosexual individuals."*

These types of encounters, unfortunately, are sometimes trivialized as jokes. However, they have a lasting impact on the individuals who are the target of these microaggressions and tragic events. In moving the district towards becoming a more culturally astute institution, these students' emotional support and safety must be heavily considered and addressed.

Unfortunately, students have had some negative experiences with peers, but there have also been some concerns about student-adult interactions. Many staff members are aware of some of the concerns of students from marginalized populations. Some staff found it necessary to think about how to engage and support students from these populations. They desire to normalize what is often viewed as “other” in society so that Mansfield can be a place where everyone feels that they can be their true and authentic selves and genuinely belong. Staff stated:

- *“We need to look at how we handle religious holidays. We need to be more inclusive of the LGBTQIA+ community. We need to be able to discuss the discrimination and prejudice that exists in our schools and not sweep it under the rug.”*
- *“The district needs more support and understanding related to students living in poverty. Additionally, how to access resources to support these students.”*

Some students have concerns about teacher support. It was stated that:

- *“I feel like no one notices me, and no teachers really ever notice when others are bullying me and/or bringing me down. Sometimes there will be teachers near me to experience things but still will not say anything about the situation, and for the most part, I feel like my thoughts and ideas don't matter because I'm shut out from talking and interrupted by some of the teachers.”*
- *“Some teachers refuse to use pronouns even when directly asked.”*

There was also feedback from families/caregivers concerning the lack of inclusivity in the district. The following comments were made by families of marginalized groups. They stated:

- *“There is factual evidence that staff discriminate among students. This should be taken more seriously.”*
- *“Mansfield says it is equitable - but it really is just a façade. They talk about bullying prevention but don't really support parents when it's reported. They talk about diversity and equity - but if that were true, the decisions would be based on factual, practical reasoning and not fear.”*

Taking inventory of these types of concerns is critical. While the school district cannot solve the world's problems, there is room to improve the conditions and experiences of students while at school. Having a shared understanding of the school culture, expectations while in school, and the requirement of respect for all will help to mitigate some of these incidents. Considering the comments from marginalized students, mainstream students, family/caregiver groups, and staff members, there are concerns about the culture and climate in the district. This is evidence that cross-cultural competence and anti-racism training are crucial to the cultural health of the district.

MPS has invested in social-emotional learning and partnerships to support the whole child's needs. Staff express interest in and a need for additional training and support.

The district has a partnership with McLean Hospital to support students regarding social-emotional and other needs. The partnership even includes a Bridge Program to support students returning to school from extended hospitalization. To continue this support, staff have expressed interest in additional training and professional learning to support all students' social and emotional needs. Leadership stated:

- *“We meet regularly with McLean Hospital and include our counselors, BESST program, administration, and RTI team. Our school has a Bridge Program to support students returning from extended hospitalizations, which helps them transition back to class with the support of a social worker that teaches effective coping strategies to use at school. We provide tutoring to help students that have missed classroom instruction and resources regarding attendance, alternative education, and social-emotional supports.”*

- *"We are working with McLean hospital for students who have socio-emotional issues, school avoidance issues, and others."*

Staff believe the McLean Hospital partnership is strong, but teachers still desire training and partnership when students return to school. Providing this type of training for teachers and staff could be optimal for students requiring this level of support. Staff stated their desires:

- *"I think we need more in-depth training in the area of social-emotional learning and trauma-informed practice."*
- *"Expanding work around student SEL needs."*

Some students also feel that more support is necessary to get the most out of their educational experience. Students stated sentiments such as: *"I have a disability, and learning is more difficult, and some teachers don't provide support, just having teachers follow 504 plans."*

When asked what their desires were for the outcome of the Equity Audit, caregivers/families shared:

- *"I believe that giving people the necessary things to thrive in the learning environment. Having that would be great. It happens a lot in MPS, but it doesn't always happen. Having teachers give the necessary support for students to learn would be really good out of this."*
- *Ensuring that my daughter consistently gets the support that she needs. There has been way too much giving support and taking it away over the years. There is only one meeting per year. It is about consistency and putting the kid first. It is not about the administration and the stuff that is too big for them. I am a little nervous that they have planted the seed about her not needing all of the support in the future. I want them to stay in the moment instead of focusing on what to take away in the future."*

Covid brought about struggles for all districts across the country. It magnified inequities that had to be addressed and handled by school districts. Mansfield assessed and acknowledged the type of support necessary for students to receive an adequate education in the worst of times. Some of the support provided by Mansfield Public Schools included free meals, information on the Affordable Connectivity program for families that did not have internet service in their homes, providing technology for families that did not have devices in the home, and shifting parent meetings to a virtual option, just to name a few. Overall, Mansfield Public Schools received a positive report concerning their efforts during this time from students. Students stated:

- *"They supported us well. They gave us free lunch and tried to keep people separate. Four people per table."*
- *"They always tried asking by email if you need help with anything."*

Leadership also weighed in on their initiatives and efforts to support students during the pandemic. Leadership stated:

- *"Food and security have opened a lot of people's eyes during COVID. Free and reduced lunch has increased during COVID. Food service has done an amazing job serving ELL students during COVID. There is no charge for food."*
- *"I think it is also throughout the pandemic we gave hotspots to families; if a family needs a device, we supply that. We are one to one in Grades 3-8."*

The district is prioritizing programming to support specialized student groups, such as RTI and MTSS, despite the perception of district staff. School leaders stated that there is an examination of the data underway, as well as an intent to use data in new ways to inform the type and direction of the support provided to students. The district has indicated that they possess and utilize an RTI process. Still, they are attempting to become more adept at the MTSS process, which includes academics and behavioral support. There are positive and notable steps being taken with regards to MTSS training and monitoring in the following ways:

- The district is preparing to use the Illuminate Education program, which addresses the needs of the whole child. Some training has taken place.
- Teachers have been provided with professional development around Tiers 1 - 3 of the MTSS framework.
- Quarters Middle School has a documented Tier 1 Accommodation protocol that includes Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and Behavioral Intervention Strategies.
- Jordan Jackson Elementary School provided a spreadsheet that was utilized as an MTSS tracker for the 2020 school year.

As further evidence of these attempts, school leadership stated: *"We look at data and rank students in each grade to identify the lowest 20-25% who are struggling. We have the RTI process in place. A team of 8 people who meet weekly with reading and math interventionists look at assessment data and get referrals for our RTI process from classroom teachers who are also administering assessments and collecting informal data on other factors in the classroom. Then, we meet as a team to set measurable goals that are doable in the classroom in a short time to see if students respond."*

There is evidence of Special Education and English Learner Accountability Handbooks on the MPS website. However, in the leadership focus group, leadership stated that based on the feedback they received, they are attempting to increase their focus on improving the learning experience of students who receive special education. There is a plan to discontinue using outdated texts and purchase more representative texts and materials. In addition, it was noted that STAR testing is in place, and the MTSS team is implementing literacy strategies. The tutoring program has been enhanced to include in-person and online tutoring for students. Even though there are moves in a positive direction with regards to MTSS and an MTSS team is in place, there is no evidence to date of a *formal* MTSS tracker or monitoring system for the entire district. These resources are essential as methods to increase accountability.

As MPS continues to grow in areas of DEI, cultural responsiveness, and equity consciousness, its efforts in partnering and supporting students and families during this historical time of Covid-19 are commendable. Absenteeism is not a major problem in the district as a whole. Chronic absenteeism by race/ethnicity demonstrates that for most students, chronic absenteeism decreased from 2020 to 2021. However, chronic absenteeism has slightly increased for Hispanic/Latino and African American students (14.9% to 16.4% and 11.9% and 12%, respectively). Multiracial students show the steepest decrease, from 14.1% to 6.6%. Table G illustrates the average number of days of absence by race/ethnicity and special populations.

Table G: Average days absent by student populations

Student Group	Average Days of Absences
Race/Ethnicity	
African American	5.1
Asian	4.0
Hispanic/Latino	5.1
MultiRacial	2.6
White	3.7
Special Populations	
Economically Disadvantaged	8.5
High Needs	6.6
LEP/English Language Learner	2.3
Students with Disabilities	6.8

This data warrants an examination of the causes of absenteeism of certain student populations. If it is deemed that there are similar causes impacting student attendance at school, this is an area that the MPS can include in the strategic planning to address the needs and concerns of students in marginalized

populations so that they can succeed in school. Staff indicated: *I think if students of a particular group are comprising a significant portion of those who are being called out for tardiness, absenteeism, or struggling with academics, then there needs to be something in place to investigate ways to change this.* In an effort to be accountable for equitable student access and outcomes, trends around graduation rates, attrition rates, and absenteeism must be examined.

Overall, district suspension and expulsion rates in MPS remain low. However, African American students, Hispanic/Latino students, students with disabilities, and high-needs students are disproportionately represented in discipline data.

As a district, the student suspension and expulsion rates were low for 2020 and 2021. However, in 2020, African American and Hispanic/Latino students had the highest in-school and out-of-school suspension rates, which were twice the district average (AA- 4.4%, Hispanic 4.7%). In 2021, there were only 20 students suspended, but at least half of the students had disabilities, and half were high-needs students.

Considering that the district overall had a notable track record for suspensions and expulsions for the 2020 and 2021 school year, there is also consideration of whether or not this was due to a significantly increased time away from school as a result of Covid-19 school closures. Table H displays the percentages of student suspensions for the 2020 school year by student demographics and suspension types.

Table H: 2020 Student Discipline Data by Student Group

Student Group	In-School Suspension	Out-of-School Suspension
All Students	.9%	.5%
Race/Ethnicity		
African American	3.1%	1.3%
Asian	*	
Hispanic/Latino	2.1%	2.6%
MultiRacial	*	
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0%	0%
White	.8%	.3%
Special Populations		
Economically Disadvantaged	1.1%	.8%
English Learner	0%	0%
Students with Disabilities	1.8%	1.0%
High Needs	1.4%	.8%

*denotes student group n is less than 6, data is truncated.

Staff appear to be aware that there is an evident difference in who gets suspended and why. Staff stated:

- *"I think we could do a better job in supporting students with supports rather than assuming or coming to the conclusion that students are just lazy or don't want to do something (work, homework, come to school ,etc.). Instead, breaking down what might be the reasons for certain behaviors and coming up with solutions & supports for these students that are struggling."*
- *"There seems to be a lack of support for students with behavioral needs."*

Similarly, students in the general student focus group spoke of the additional support needed for minoritized students:

- *"I feel the minority groups aren't given as many options as the white students get, and they need more support. We've had instances where they aren't taken as seriously."*
- *"To build on that I think we all need to learn a lot about how diverse we really are as a school and how we're handling these situations and how open-minded we really are. I don't know if the school is providing that. I've learned a lot about racial injustice and the past years we haven't gotten that."*
- *"Discipline data, as well as other data sources, should be reviewed to ensure equity for all students."*

Similar to Table H, Table I shows the results of student discipline data for the 2021 school year. Again, even though overall the rates were low, it is noticed that the highest group that experienced suspensions or expulsion was students with disabilities. It is a known fact and research-based that the largest group of students referred to special education services tend to be students from marginalized populations. This data supports this claim. One staff member stated, *"African American students are being referred more often than whites for Special Education services."* Based on this data, there is a clear demographic distinction between those who are suspended and those who are not. This warrants examination of the district's practices regarding what is considered an infraction and who commits it. Also, this warrants an examination of the punitive practices and perhaps, an increased consideration of restorative practices.

Table I: 2021 Student Discipline Data by Student Group

Student Group	In-School Suspension	Out-of-School Suspension
All Students	.4%	.4%
Race/Ethnicity		
African American	*	*
Asian	*	
Hispanic/Latino	*	*
MultiRacial	*	
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	*	*
White	.4%	.4%
Special Populations		
Economically Disadvantaged	.9%	.9%
English Learner	0%	0%
Students with Disabilities	1.3%	1.7%
High Needs	.7%	.8%

*denotes student group n is less than 6, data is truncated

The district is invested in programs to support students. There is evidence of programming supporting students academically and holistically, which benefits students' readiness to learn.

Continued Hours at Mansfield Public Schools (C.H.A.M.P.S.) provides before and after school care and support for elementary students in grades K- 5 that is not only academic but also enriching and fun. In addition to programming during the school year, it also provides several summer institute sessions for students. According to the Mansfield Public Schools website, the C.H.A.M.P.S. program offers the following amenities:

- Structured differently from a regular school day in order to provide varied experiences for the children.
- Supports academic learning by assisting children with their homework in our "Homework Clubs."
- Encourages children to engage in hands-on learning activities that are vital to the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

- Exposes children to a wide range of experiences that are developmentally appropriate, academically enriching, and physically engaging.
- Provides fun, supervised activities that are geared towards promoting learning and peer interaction in a respectful, non-competitive way.
- Will provide a healthy and nutritious snack for each child prepared by Mansfield Public Schools' Food Service.
- Is staffed with experienced, caring professionals who strive to work together to meet the needs of each child with a child/staff ratio of 14:1.

The Mansfield Public Schools' after school enrichment program is one hour per week for eight weeks. It has the following activities: chess club, flag football, knitting, basketball, and various classes per year. This directly supports educating the whole child and tapping into a variety of intelligence. Leadership stated:

- *"In my programs and all of the programs in MPS, they try very hard to have a student participate in something if they want to, whether it is a sport or club or after-school program."*
- *"They do very well, including boys and girls, whether you are black, white, pink, boy, girl, or LGBT."*

It is clear that the C.H.A.M.P.S. program offers many opportunities for students before and after school. In the interest of equity, it is important to note that the program requires tuition, which could be a barrier for some families to enroll their students, even if they have the need. Leadership is aware of these issues and stated:

- *"We are trying really hard to say don't worry, what kind of payment plan do you need?"*
- *"Sometimes, parents are embarrassed to come to us if they need help with their tuition or any kind of assistance."*

Attending this program not only supports families in need of before and after-school care but is also designed with the best interest of students in mind. Careful consideration of including all families and supplementing those economically disadvantaged should be considered. This is possibly an area to leverage the community since increasing the participation of students requires additional support and staff. One community partner shared: *"Continue to seek out opportunities to work with town members/businesses. Businesses can provide great resources to the school district. Sometimes, it takes out-of-the-box thinking, but the schools have resources the business could benefit from, and in return, the schools could benefit. Two examples are the TDA driving school and the college that uses the high school. More businesses could use the schools and, in return, provide resources to the school."*

Consideration of outside resources could greatly increase full access to programming at the Mansfield Public Schools. As noted by a community partner, it may require some thinking outside of the box.

School facilities play a key role in student readiness to learn. As part of the equity audit, there were no significant complaints concerning the school facilities except for bathrooms. There have been complaints about the physical condition of some of the bathroom facilities in addition to negative activities conducted by students, which hinders other students from even using the bathroom facilities. Students stated:

- *"I hope the school administrators will hear our voices. We should have small breaks to refresh our minds and fix the boy's bathroom."*
- *"Smoking usage has gone up through the roof. The bathroom smells so bad."*
- *"A few weeks ago, a girl overdosed in the bathroom, and it was part acid. The problem is that the school can't prevent everything. They can't put cameras in bathrooms. Have hall monitors take the initiative to follow us around. If someone is in the bathroom for 20-25 minutes, they will come in. I think the schools are doing what they can."*
- *"They put TVs on walls that no one looks at. We wanted bathroom renovations. They are old and out of order. There are two working stalls. One toilet flushes for 20 minutes. Students say they need to be fixed."*

Based on the feedback from students above, a full examination of the bathroom facilities and monitoring of the bathroom activities are warranted because issues of this type have the potential to impact students' readiness to learn.

It is known that students in many school districts have varying economic backgrounds. In Mansfield Public Schools, it is evident that many students hail from strong economic backgrounds, but some students do not, and the economically disadvantaged population is growing in the district. Many student needs must be met for students to be fully ready to learn. In some cases where families have challenging financial circumstances, students are impacted in school. Mansfield has been extremely supportive of students in many ways during the pandemic with resources such as access to technology and food. The standardized testing data and other data indicate that students with economically disadvantaged backgrounds lag behind other students who do not have such challenging circumstances. The district is aware of this achievement gap and is now faced with addressing this glaring issue. Leadership stated:

- *"The gap is with disadvantaged students. Why is this? We are working through academic academies to help students over the break. A lot of the students are disadvantaged. One teacher stopped asking students what they were doing over break. They are the ones home by themselves."*
- *"Looking for tools to support our students in financial need - in the classroom. I feel I am swimming upstream as hard as I can. Anything."*

Because many economically disadvantaged students are also English learners or students requiring special education services, the district is tasked with including various types of resources and interventions for support. This is another area where continuing to leverage the resources in the community could prove to be impactful in helping students succeed in school.

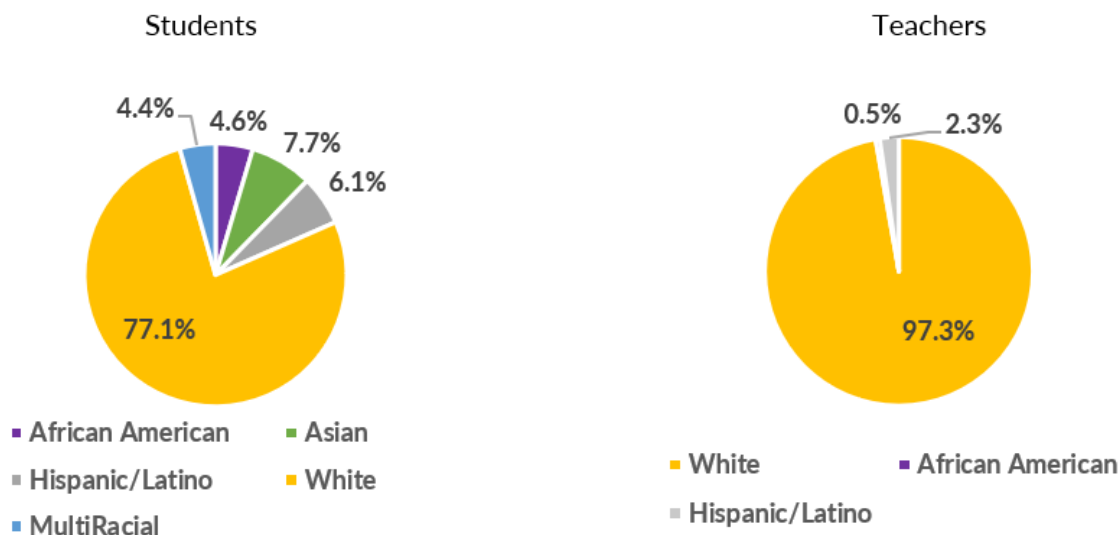
DOMAIN 6: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Workforce Development: Systems and processes attract, recruit, cultivate, hire, and develop new and diverse staff. All staff receive ongoing professional development that results in the retention of a talented, culturally competent, and diverse workforce.

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.

Diversity among the MPS student population is increasing and MPS staff are not yet representative of student diversity along a variety of indicators. As student enrollment changes, implications for staffing needs will also shift. Mansfield Public Schools has a majority White student and teacher population (77.1% and 97.3%, respectively). However, Hispanic/Latino students account for 6.1% of the student population, while Hispanic/Latino teachers account for 2.3% of teachers. Similarly, African American students represent less than 5% of the student population, but there are even fewer African American staff, with less than 1% of teachers who are African American. The below show the District's full-time staff by race, ethnicity, and gender. In the 2021-2022 school year, among the District's 301.4 FTE teacher-level positions.

Figure AA: Student and teacher demographics
2021- 2022 Student Enrollment and Teacher Demographics by Race/Ethnicity



Staff represent multiple languages spoken by students and families, but do not represent all of the most spoken languages. During the equity audit process, MPS leaders named the nine most prevalent languages spoken among students and families after English (in alphabetical order), including Arabic, Chinese (traditional), French, Pashto, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Urdu, and Vietnamese. Based on documentation of staff language proficiency at the middle and high schools, there are 14 staff who speak

Spanish, seven who speak French, three who speak Portuguese, and few individuals who speak Czech, Greek, and Russian.

Additionally, enrollment of students with high needs is increasing over time. In 2018, enrollment was at 26% for high needs students, and in 2022 enrollment was at 33.6%. Economically disadvantaged student enrollment demonstrated a similar pattern; in 2018, enrollment was at approximately 14% and increased to approximately 17% in 2021. However, most MPS teachers (92.8%) have experience in low-poverty schools, and 98.8% of teachers have previous teaching experience. Approximately 68% of administrators are experienced administrators (at least three years in a Massachusetts public school), and 51.6% have experience in low-poverty schools.

Survey responses from District staff, school leaders, and staff indicate that hiring a diverse and representative staff is an area for improvement in the District. In response to the staff survey prompt, “My **school** is intentional in recruiting and hiring a talented staff that is racially diverse,” 26% Agree, 35% Somewhat Agree, 22% Somewhat Disagree, and 17% Disagree. In response to the staff survey prompt, “The **district** is intentional in recruiting and hiring a talented staff that is racially diverse,” 24% Agree, 32% Somewhat Agree, 25% Somewhat Disagree, and 19% Disagree. Leadership survey results indicate that 33% of leaders agree, and 54% somewhat agree with the statement.

Figure AB: Staff and leadership responses

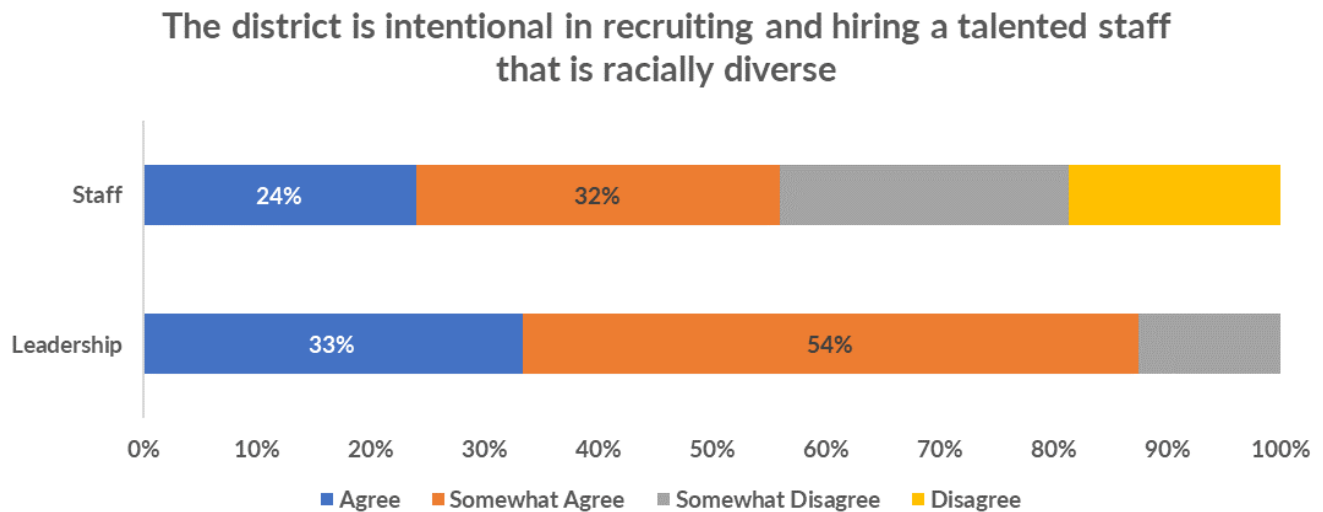
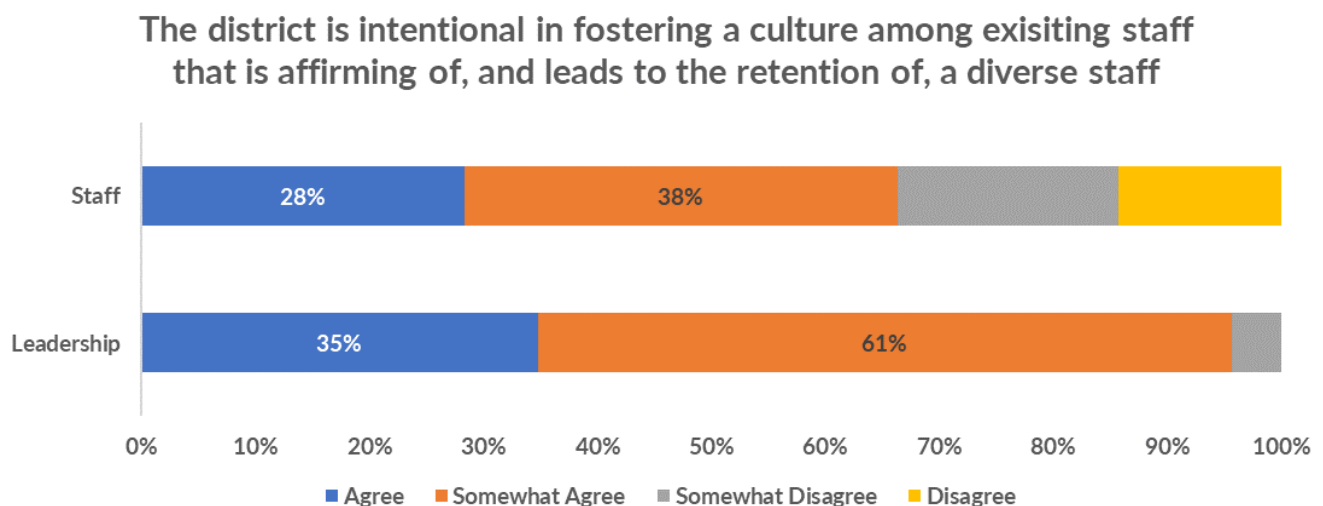


Figure AC: Staff and leadership responses



Students indicated their desire for the District to hire more diverse teachers.

- *"If there is no diversity, we don't learn firsthand about others' cultures. We can only learn from the third person."*
- *"There is a lot of diversity in coaches on my football team. They are all different and diverse—taller, shorter, different races and religions."*
- *"I think Mansfield is very diverse. I feel the minority groups aren't given as many options as the white students get, and they need more support. We've had instances where they aren't taken as seriously, and more access to guidance counselors and more counselors is provided."*
- *"I think that they should try to hire more people from different backgrounds. The staff is, I think, 99% white. I don't have actual numbers to pull that from. Maybe students should try to push more clubs to talk about their own ethnic identities. More courses that focus on different cultures and groups. There is one world history and one Asian history class, and that is about it."*

Stakeholders expounded on this need and the impact it has on students and the community:

- A staff member shared: *"Our staff is not very diverse. Students have specifically expressed not being able to relate even to staff. Our staff is primarily white. We have few staff who are part of the LGBTQ+ community, few staff of color, etc."*
- Another staff member commented: *"Lack of diversity amongst staff is a national issue, not just our own school issue. Particularly for Black males - this is a national issue. I have heard from some LGBTQ students looking for more support - we have GSA and LGBTQ groups. It is helpful for individuals to recognize that there is the staff who represent them. Some staff are more closeted about their orientation - they may feel unsafe sharing."*
- A District staff member noted: *"There is some movement and conversations around bettering the district in terms of race/ethnicity. Almost 90% of students and staff are White. However, we do have our minority group, where there is some lack of experience dealing with minorities. I would like to see more staff asking about students' culture before talking about problems. Also, I would like to see more staff asking about cultures, languages, etc."*
- A District staff member commented: *"I don't know the student population's demographics. We are working on expanding our reach with postings. I have an HR assistant. We receive for Mass PDE a long list of sites. I want to start using some of those sites."*
- Another District staff member shared: *"I would like to see more conversations around socioeconomic status, race, and children from different homes. I hear a lot of biases from teachers who work hard - and to be able to explore those starting in gen ed matters. We end up in a gen ed special ed battle. I know we overidentified in sped. I would like to see real conversations. I would like to see a more diverse staff."*
- Families shared:
 - *"We moved to Mansfield. I knew it was an all-white community, so there weren't any fair or equitable considerations for my children at school. There are a few teachers that are good-hearted that may have had previous experience with minorities, and they try to do their best to mitigate those situations, but there are no black teachers. One or two Black aids in the school, so there are no real day-to-day interactions with minorities that non-black students or the teachers have to deal with."*
 - *"MPS is inclusive when a worldwide event is happening. They will not take a stance (bullying, LGBTQ). They will only send an email if parents complain. They started Black History Month events that happened a week later. This happened because a parent emailed. They just did a morning announcement one time."*

While stakeholders acknowledge the need to diversify staff and policies reflect and encourage efforts, there is a missed opportunity to create and facilitate inclusive spaces for diverse staff (staff of color, immigrant staff, LGBTQIA+, staff with disabilities, bi-lingual, etc.) and to schools with the necessary resources and tools to create safe and positive work environments that support staff retention. Increasing diversity among staff is not enough then; the environment has to be inclusive so that all staff is retained.

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.

In partnership with the Town of Mansfield, MPS has outlined and understood processes and systems for the hiring and recruitment of new staff. The Human Resources Department website includes information regarding open positions, benefits, employee assistance, and additional information for prospective employees.

School leaders shared that the hiring process begins when there is an open position at a school. Principals create the posting and complete the necessary paperwork, and then Human Resources at the District office posts the open position in multiple places, including professional organizations and websites. As candidates submit applications, school leaders review candidates' qualifications, experiences, and certifications to select candidates for the interview process. Schools create interview committees and a series of interview activities to determine the candidate that is offered the position. Schools recommend the superintendent, who makes the final hiring decision and completes the hiring process.

HR practices are defined and result in overall staff retention; however, there are not yet systems and strategies to fully recruit/support marginalized staff. Mansfield has been able to retain staff over the years. MPS retained 94.8% of staff in 2021, compared to the state retention rate of 88.4%. Multiple staff named district retention as a strength. A district leader commented, *"The district prioritizes staff retention by closely working with everyone. We can address specific concerns. It has been ADA that we have had to deal with lately. We work closely with staff who raise concerns around workload. With COVID, our staff was incredibly stressed about returning to work. I worked with ADA requests and people who have a disability and couldn't return to work. Have worked with teachers and principals (e.g., for managing students not asking properly). We are a smaller size, so I can actually work with everyone."* Another district staff member shared, *"We have a lot of applicants for positions. We follow the contract. We are able to fill most positions. We are lucky to have people who want to be a part of Mansfield. Principals lead the hiring process. We have an amazing onboarding system that our IT director leads. We are able to send out the [information] to people and fill it out electronically."* Despite many folks saying there is a need for greater staff diversity and that the staff is not yet representing students, leadership survey results indicate that 78% of Leadership Staff feel that they have the support they need to ensure that their school's hiring process results in diverse and qualified candidates.

Mindsets and policies support recruitment and hiring efforts of more diverse teaching staff, yet current recruitment practices are not yet yielding diverse candidates. District and school leaders highlighted some of the challenges and needs:

- *"We didn't have the support of an HR representative before- that department has grown and been very helpful. It helped to center all of us around a healthy process. Career fairs have been mixed, but we go back at it. We get a lot of candidates to apply for positions."*
- *"I have been trying to make some adjustments. The institutional processes that the department chairs screen the candidates and do first-round interviews. I have wanted interview committees. Some have been receptive, and some haven't. I have seen over time get a group, and then it withers to no one wants to be a part of it. My thought is that they are not welcome in the department if they are serving on the committee. Begging people now is concerning to me."*
- *"A couple of years ago, we would evaluate them on just teaching, but 90% of their job is not teaching. As far as recruitment, since the pandemic, we have been blunter about who we need for hall monitors, subs, and teaching positions."*
- *"One benefit of the pandemic is to open up and hire a more diverse workforce. What used to happen is I would have a strong candidate, and they wouldn't have a certification. I have some that started on an*

emergency license, and now they are all certified. In the past, I had to hire someone that was not the best fit, but they had the paper."

- *"We have a lot of candidates that went to Mansfield. We put together teams that are a cross-section of different roles. It presents some challenges, but they are very helpful."*

While stakeholders acknowledge the need to diversify staff and policies reflect and encourage efforts, the SIP does not contain any action steps for increasing the diversity of District staff. It is also worth noting that the district focuses on diversifying teachers. However, similar attention for other positions—such as District office staff, school leaders, paraprofessionals, and substitutes—was not evident.

MPS has published policies around Civil Rights, nondiscrimination, and grievances for staff. While staff indicates general awareness of how to report acts of discrimination, levels of clarity and comfort in addressing these issues vary. The MPS website page on Civil Rights states, "The Mansfield Public Schools prohibits unlawful discrimination, harassment (including sexual harassment), and retaliation against anyone based on race, color, age, disability, sex (including pregnancy, pregnancy-related conditions, or recovery from these conditions, including but not limited to, lactation), sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion or religious belief, national origin, ethnicity, ancestry, retaliation, marital status, genetic information, veteran or military status, limited English proficiency, homelessness, or any other class of individuals protected from discrimination under state or federal law in education, admission, access to or treatment in, its programs, services, benefits, activities, and terms and conditions of employment."

Publishing and then implementing clear procedures for reporting discriminatory acts and behaviors signal to employees and stakeholders that the District is committed to promoting and ensuring equitable human resource practices. The School Committee's policy for Nondiscrimination (AC) includes a list of numbers to call to report acts of discrimination. For staff, the policy states, "Employees/Job Applicants also may submit questions and complaints of alleged discrimination to the Director of Human Resources, Mansfield Public Schools, 2 Park Row, 508-261-7538." The School Committee also has a policy for Staff Complaints and Grievances (GBK) that indicates administration will ensure clear 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.

Staff survey responses indicate a comfortability with having conversations with students and other staff involving identity. In response to the staff survey prompt, "I am comfortable having conversations with students involving identity (including race, ethnicity, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, immigration status, and ability) even when the conversations may be challenging," 44% Agree, 43% Somewhat Agree, 9% Somewhat Disagree, and 5% Disagree. Leadership survey results indicate that 29% of leaders Agree, 48% Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, and 19% Disagree with the statement. In response to the staff survey prompt, "I am comfortable having conversations with staff members involving identity (including race, ethnicity, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, immigration status, and ability) even when the conversations may be challenging," 47% Agree, 40% Somewhat Agree, 9% Somewhat Disagree, and 4% Disagree. Leadership survey results indicate that 25% of leaders Agree, 54% Somewhat agree, Somewhat Disagree, and 13% Disagree with the statement.

As discussed in Domain 4, there are initial efforts to provide and a need to increase cultural proficiency training for all staff. Staff and leadership survey responses indicate a general awareness of reporting methods and common responses to how staff report acts of racism or discrimination. For example, in response to the staff survey prompt, "The district has clear guidelines and procedures for how staff can report acts of racism or discrimination relating to other social identities," 40% Agree, 30% Somewhat Agree, 16% Somewhat Disagree, and 11% Disagree. Likewise, in response to the Leadership survey prompt, "The district has clear guidelines and procedures for how staff can report acts of racism or discrimination relating to other social identities," 58% Agree, 29% Somewhat Agree, 12% Somewhat

Disagree, and 0% Disagree. However, 17% of staff respondents and 12% of leadership respondents indicated that they did not know how to report a complaint:

- *"Mostly employee relation issues. Discrimination or harassment."*
- *"Using grievances, do not come to the office. They are managed by a first-level supervisor. We do not have many grievances "*
- *"The office oversees grievances. If someone has a claim of discrimination or harassment. Grievances rarely come to my office. I am working with one now with a teacher. We are trying to put together something for the teacher. They are handled by the first-level supervisor. Rarely do they come to my level. We are lucky in MPS. I don't have a ton of grievances on the school side. We are open to working with people if they have a grievance. "*

Staff experience varied levels of inclusion, particularly staff who identify with a marginalized population including BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and staff with disabilities. There are not clearly published and easily accessible staff handbooks, policies or practices to specifically support varied identities and needs. There is some evidence of effort to strengthen staff inclusivity, though efforts are limited in scope, such as gender neutral language in the collective bargaining agreement (he/she/their), and may not yet be translating into practice districtwide. Staff also shared a number of policies and practices that are not yet fully inclusive for all staff, including the need for more inclusive leave/time off policies that include multiple family structures and LGBTQIA+ staff and more transparent and inclusive policies for staff with disabilities to access accommodations. As MPS works to improve equity and inclusion for all, it will be important to ensure all staff have access to the supports they need, and that these supports are shared multiple times and through multiple modalities, as not all disabilities or needs are visible and some may develop or shift over time. Additionally, as the district works to diversify over time, it will be important to create welcoming and fully inclusive spaces that create a sense of belonging and ultimately retain and grow staff in MPS. Staff comments include:

- *"Our maternity policy doesn't say anything about same-sex marriage. As someone who may want a family, that sticks out to me."*
- *"We have two personal days per year [and] can use our third personal day to [attend] a family member's graduation and wedding... talking to colleagues, it feels unfair that this definition of family is being determined by this external force... The idea that I have to defend who my family is makes me sad."*
- *"We have a daily newsletter at our school, and the only recognition of personal family is when a family member has a child, nothing else is mentioned. It feels like a heteronormative system is being forced on us."*
- *"No one told me I could get ADA paperwork or the steps I needed to take to do that. I had to have a mental breakdown for someone to tell me."*
- *"Once I got ADA paperwork in, it was dragged out. Then an HR person wanted to come in and observe me in class to see how [serious my disability] really was. Why is it that my paperwork isn't enough?"*
- *"They need to have procedures in place for staff with disabilities - what to do, where to go. Had no one talked to us, we wouldn't know where to go."*
- *"They say reasonable accommodations, but I would say reasonable accommodations as well. The time lag was too long, and my doctor was just done."*

DOMAIN 7: FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Family and Community Engagement: The district and schools intentionally and authentically communicate with and successfully engage students, families, and community members.

Mansfield Public School District uses a variety of methods to communicate district-wide and school-level information to community members and families. The District provides support to increase accessibility, however, the effectiveness of communication strategies varies for different populations.

The District reaches out to students' families in various formats at all school levels. A majority of parents and family members reported receiving consistent communication with the district in different formats. When asked about communication, families stated, *"I think it varies at each school, depending on grade level, in the beginning, kindergarten, we had solid parent-teacher communications, the principal, the nurse, any party we need to hear from we hear from, we've had the same experience through middle school, parent-teacher night, newsletters"* and *"I would agree, I think the communication and the teachers are good thorough newsletters to let us know what's going on in the classroom this week, I am satisfied with the level of communication, so I know what's going on."* Across the district, formal opportunities for parents and community members to gather and share information with the District include Parent Night, the Superintendent listening tour, and Curriculum Night. At the high school level, college planning nights and post-secondary nights are other communication events. Parent Night is offered as an opportunity for parents to meet their student's teachers, and these engagement activities are offered for students in the English language program. Parents also have access to an online portal with student grades and a teacher communication email system. Parents noted, *"There is a portal (Aspen) to find out if they are turning in all their assignments... so you look at the portal and see if they turned in homework and grade, and this year, for the first time, the teachers are sort of hands off, and they leave the responsibility for the students and parents to keep up with grades, surprises on report cards, if you don't go to conferences, you don't have a chance to talk about your child's learning, so you have to go."*

The Superintendent's listening tour was conducted via Zoom video conferencing in two sessions as an opportunity for parents to voice concerns and give feedback. Parents were also able to leave email communication after each meeting. The in-person learning presentations during the COVID19 pandemic were shared via YouTube, thus increasing accessibility for parents. Parents also reported that the Superintendent newsletter is a consistent source of useful information. In qualitative survey data, parents reported, *"The newsletter is good that they send. I wish I was getting something similar from his teachers, like a progress report or something at the end of the week if possible or every two weeks or even a monthly close-out. I see the Bently awards highlighted, but I wish I knew of other programs that highlighted how kids are doing well since this only highlights a select few."* Another family reported during a focus group, *"The superintendent sends out communications, and I always read what she puts out there. There has been a lot of understanding about what we were going through, trying to decide if we should send kids back to school. Her and the principal did a great job trying to get resources and technology. I feel there has been that recognition that folks are going to struggle getting things, so there has been over communications."* The District has also pivoted to more virtual meetings to increase family engagement. As noted by a staff member, *"embracing virtual meetings has increased parent engagement in conferences when we run IEP and 504 meetings. Attending a meeting used to mean taking a day off work, which would limit who could attend. We can now work around lunch breaks, and*

some parents are meeting from their cars.” Attempts to increase accessibility support the District’s effort to be more equitable, as more parents/families are able to participate in district communications via phone.

Parents expressed appreciation for support and communication. For example, families stated, *“We don’t have a baseline other than this current year. I feel communications from the superintendent have been appropriate in timing and frequency. She sent a notice last week about an incident in the building. I would say, though, that there are a lot of different lists (some that only one parent can be on), which is hard to manage. There is some lack of clarity on the lists and why is there only one parent able to be on it when both could benefit from the communication.”* Other examples include, *“I can give an example of when my son was in the 2nd grade, and the majority was home for covid every time his teacher saved him, my son is an extravert, covid was rough for him that teacher and her energy on a daily basis encouragement positive environment it wasn’t easy for her either, she had to adapt, to this day her level of enthusiasm kept them in the game, the whole nine yards, I know every teacher has a different but that one, in particular, was great, she knocked it out the part, to me that was the single best example of someone that was invested. Put her game face on every day”* and *“school does a good job of communicating events to parents, getting more notices about what they study and how they study. Across the board, they are good at notifying parents of daily curriculum things.”*

Although the District holds formal opportunities for family communication, not all family members report being fully included and having a positive experience with the district. Particularly, parents of color, when asked about their hopes for the equity audit, reported, *“I hope they get a better understanding of the issues that are going on. They think everything is going ok. They gloss it over and say “hey” that’s just Massachusetts, which is segregated. If you want fairness, I don’t know where the middle ground is. Cambridge was fair with a good mixture. That was the only fair city and town since I have been here over 50 years”* and *“I feel like any kind of partnership is nonexistent. We get weekly emails, no real effort. I don’t know if the principal knows my child or if something would happen to my family... only if your child is in trouble, they have to report it to you.”* Some parents/family members report that the District takes an overall, one-size approach to parent communication. One family member shared: *“Not as much two-way communication as we realized. You are making decisions about our children without us at the table. I understand the curriculum, but I think that as parents of kindergarteners, there is a ton of talking at you. I understand that it was COVID, but there was no opportunity for further explanations. There is a lot of talking “at.” If we don’t facilitate it to get feedback consistently. My concern is that people assume that everybody can do the same things that they can, but they cannot. I work with low-income people every day. What my peers see as normal is not always normal. Have you given people the opportunity to elect their preferred method of communication? When you craft an MO {modus operandi} based on what most people can do, you leave out some. I think of this as inclusivity-those who do not have a smartphone or fit that mold. How are we supporting families with cognitive disabilities who cannot navigate the computer? As we talk about supporting students with disabilities, we need to support our families with disabilities.”*

Parents of students with Individualized Education Plans report mixed experiences with communication. One family reported, *“At the school, we receive the weekly newsletter, see the calendar and what themes are working on the communication through email, I know the KMS newsletter goes out. [Superintendent’s] newsletter goes out, I appreciate the communication that they do, and a progress report comments it’s not just cut and paste. Even with unplanned communication school-wide issues, Tik Tok thinks they are very quick with nipping it in the bud, so I appreciate that.”* Another family reported that communication was lacking due to time constraints during meetings, *“Progress reports with report cards. But I wish we had 2 IEP meetings per year. One 8-minute conference with the middle school teachers in January, plus 1 IEP meeting per year, is not enough. They say we can request a meeting if we have problems, but I don’t have a specific problem about which to call a meeting. I really want another check-in meeting. My son works with so many teachers and specialists and therapists at the school. But I barely get to talk with them.”* Another family reported feeling unsupported during a school-level transition with an IEP, *“They initially weren’t going to have a transition meeting. In the fall, during the transition meeting, they said that we would have another meeting in the spring. They said we are not doing that even though*

they talked about it in the fall. I was disappointed. I said that I would take it up with the SPED department. I told him that I would like to learn more about this. I got a meeting with her current IEP. My daughter is in 6th grade and just learning how to tell time. Just getting ready for the school day is a task. For them to think that she would just show up to middle school made me pissed. A person from QMS in the meeting ended up being her teacher. That is exactly what she needed, and I had to fight for it. If I had stopped and just listened to what they said, it would not have worked. It ended up working out for her."

Parents of English Language Learners also reported mixed experiences with teacher and district communication. Similar to parents of students with IEPs, parents of ELL students felt communication was restricted during conferences. One parent of an ELL student noted on a survey, *"again, very limited. Only during teacher-parent meetings. Which is a joke. Only 5 minutes per teacher. Not even close to enough time."* Other parents noted standard forms of communication such as *"through teacher conferences and progress reports"* and *"through emails and what my children tell me or if I email and ask."* These pieces of evidence suggest that there are no additional efforts to reach out to parents of students in special populations, aside from the usual communication that students across the district receive. Other evidence of this claim can be found in the district's usage of translation services. One staff member noted, *"We go through our district EL services so that we know what needs to be translated; we have interpreters for us for phones."* As found in parent night flyers provided by the district, there are opportunities for translation services for families. However, the frequency of these opportunities is a concern. One staff member mentioned an unawareness of an issue unless parents express a concern which can be implied as the onus is on parents to reach out to the district, *"Sometimes parents are embarrassed to come to us if they need help with their tuition or any kind of assistance"* another staff member made the following statement, *"We have to call parents to get them into the programs. There could be a better way to get the information out. People do not read the webpage."*

It should be noted that during this equity audit survey, there was no participation from families of English learner students. The surveys were translated into several languages to accommodate non-English speakers, and the information was posted on the district website. Other recruitment methods used are discussed in the methodology section, but it is mentioned here to focus on the absence of a specific population during feedback opportunities. This could be seen as an indication that the District is unsuccessful in its attempts to reach all families.

Additionally, some parents reported that the district could better anticipate instances when communication should be forthcoming. For instance, during student transitions, a parent reported, *"The other daughter entered 10th-grade midyear. It was pretty rough. It took a long time for the school to be ready for her. There were a lot of barriers to getting her setup. There were a lot of barriers to communication. If you have a new student, it seems that someone would reach out and introduce themselves to the parents or offer some kind of tour. She had to learn everything on her own. There is a better way to transition students so that they feel welcome. She couldn't figure out why."* Another family reported also needing more support during a transition, *"It was a pandemic. I have one that entered middle school in the fall of 2020, so we were smack dab in the middle, and it was hard. It will be nice to see a transition with my little one. Hopefully, that is normal. Things that couldn't happen, the school made happen virtually. We toured the school virtually. It was a little more challenging in the 7th grade. They were learning all the things that a 6th grader would learn. Students are supported with integration. It continues on."* Families also experienced difficulties during transitions that took place during the COVID school closures: *"She transitioned from [X school] into [Y school] through Covid. She missed the last half of 5th grade and is fully remote for 6th grade. That has been a challenge. Some teachers were supportive, and some were not so much. My oldest has had her own health challenges. The teachers have embraced that and given a lot of flexibility. I worry about her moving on because she is a little behind socially and does not always blend well with the other kids. Some teachers have reached out with support."*

Reports of inconsistent family engagement are triangulated by District central office staff, *"We put a few different things in place, and COVID helped. We are not meeting the engagement with families. We have 3400*

parents. I had 200 parents registered to listen, and I could imagine a few were going in and out. We are not reaching everyone. We are reaching 10%. We are doing newsletters, and we can see how many people look at them". Another district leader noted, "As needed, we help those who tell us they need that; supplying bagged lunches; hard drive-throughs where they could come if they needed it; those things add up." One staff member stated, "We didn't survey families for the need to avoid feeling like someone was put on the spot. Through communications, we let families know devices were available to provide a resource."

Survey items from parents and families are presented below.

Table J: Family survey response data

The district engages me as an active and full partner in my child's educational experience.	
Agree	Somewhat Agree
47.82%	35.26%

Figure AD: Parent response by race/ethnicity

I am aware of the *district* resources available to support students and families

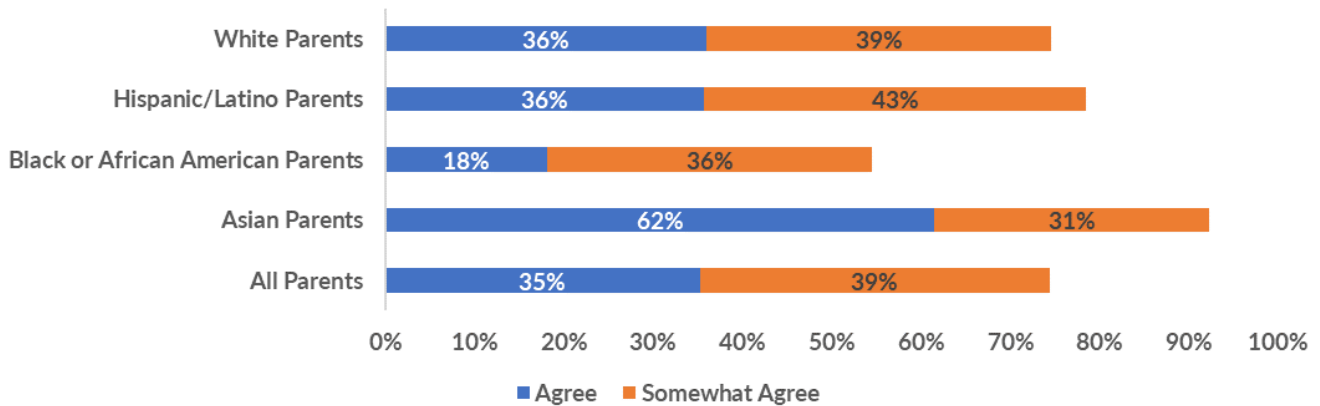
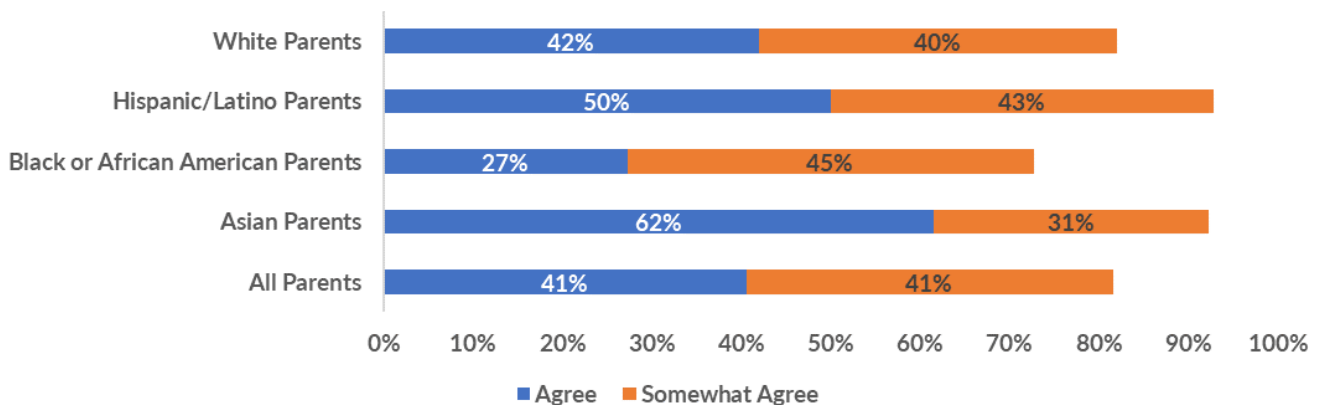


Figure AE: Parent response by race/ethnicity

I am aware of the *school* resources available to support students and families.



The District seeks input from family and community members. However, it is unclear how family feedback influences district decision-making.

As previously mentioned, families are asked to provide feedback to the District. There are parent communication groups to facilitate communication between families and the District. However, attempts to reach families are not yet successful, as evidenced by the quote from leadership, *“MESA is a parent group. CPAC. Is it the same people doing the work all of the time? Yes. We did a CPAC meeting the other day. We had six people who attended. We are trying to increase numbers. Meetings on vaping and on different topics. McClain events have pulled a lot of families. Lunch and Learn, and I have got parents at that time. We try to offer different times.”* and *“we work collaboratively with CPAC, we’ve run parent workshops for parents and SM and HS. At preschool for parents of kids. We did a group for grandparents raising grandchildren from HS age to pre-k. We have done transition workshops for families - community college, Bridgewater state, and local health organizations to discuss services after HS. Working on next year - series to demystify the IEP process. We’ve also collaborated with the police pop unit (problem-oriented policing) and have a more collaborative relationship with ppl in town.”* Parents expressed that attempts to communicate with the district can be one way. For example, *“I can say there is an attempt - to share ‘here is how we use library services, technology, etc.’ I think the offering of communications in multiple languages is important. Some parents, by choice or necessity, may not participate. I have had teachers say, ‘I know you are really busy; when can we talk?’ And I appreciated that flexibility, but sometimes the onus is still on us as families.”*

Families are unsure if feedback is considered in district decision-making. When parents were asked directly if they felt their voice was heard and incorporated into district decision-making, a parent reported, *“No, they ask for feedback, and it doesn’t seem like much was done or changed.”* Another family recognized a similar pattern *“I agree. Sometimes, we get the surveys, but the action is the exact opposite of the surveys. You took the time, which is great, to get parents involved, but they did what they wanted anyway.”* Other families reported, *“As far as the Student Opportunity Act, they sent an email asking for input on how the money will be used. They had a math accelerator program for those who were struggling and had IEPs. It was last minute, and there was no input from families. I still don’t think most parents knew about this. They send out surveys to SPED families.”* and *“I am sure that they ask input is the same as decision making. We don’t get paid to make the decisions, but we take the time to do the survey. The superintendent represents the community. It would be more reflective of what the parents need and expect, but decision making does not reflect the input”.* Students also expressed similar thoughts on district communication students mentioned, *“I hope the school administrators will hear our voices,”* and *“I feel comforted in knowing that there was a process for students to give input,”* and *“I work with the principal, and it’s nice going to meetings, they want to take our opinions into mind.”*

Community partners surveys showed that 100% of organizations felt that the district solicited and incorporated their feedback during district decision-making. All community partner organizations reported that the district communicates partner services effectively, ensuring families are aware of the resources available to support them and their families.

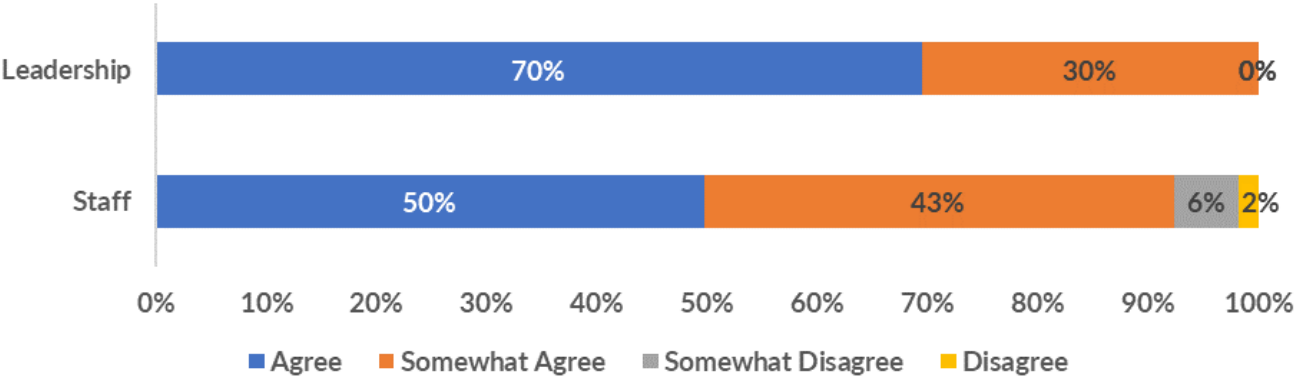
Survey data is presented below for additional evidence in Table K and Figure AF

Table K: Family/caregiver survey data

My input and feedback are valued by school staff and administration.		
	Agree	Somewhat Agree
All Parents	38.16%	37.68%

Figure AF: Leadership and staff response

The district effectively communicates with families in ways that are timely, culturally competent, and reflective of family values and priorities.



DOMAIN 8: DATA

Data: The district utilizes data regularly to identify and address inequities in the system. Disaggregated data is accessible and informs decision-making throughout the district.

Mansfield Public Schools utilizes data to identify student needs and inform support placements. There is not yet a systematic process to identify and address specific student population needs using disaggregated data.

According to the 2019 Mansfield School Improvement Plan, the district intends to examine Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System data to identify student needs. Teachers have access to MCAS data for instructional purposes, but staff sharing these data procedures are not yet a regular practice. A teacher stated, *"We have a meeting to look at MCAS data, and the admin broke it down into different groups, including high needs. Data in the classroom for what a child needs in the classroom and their academic performance."* Regarding data usage for all student needs, teachers stated, *"meeting diverse needs has to become a priority at the forefront. It is more talk than action, and I think there is a lot we can do to make this a priority. Kids who get support - it is not always data-driven. SST is our RTI process, and teachers bring them through the process, and if not, they don't get the support. It should be more data-driven. There should be certain assessments we do for all kids, and we are moving in that direction, but we aren't there yet."* Another teacher noted, *"when we are talking now, we are talking about equitably meeting kids behavior needs and academic needs, but we are meeting the needs of kids who look like all of our students. There has been a big push here to make sure that the literature we use is representative of different backgrounds, skins, and cultures, but I don't think you see that in our classrooms. Kids may not be really getting what they need."*

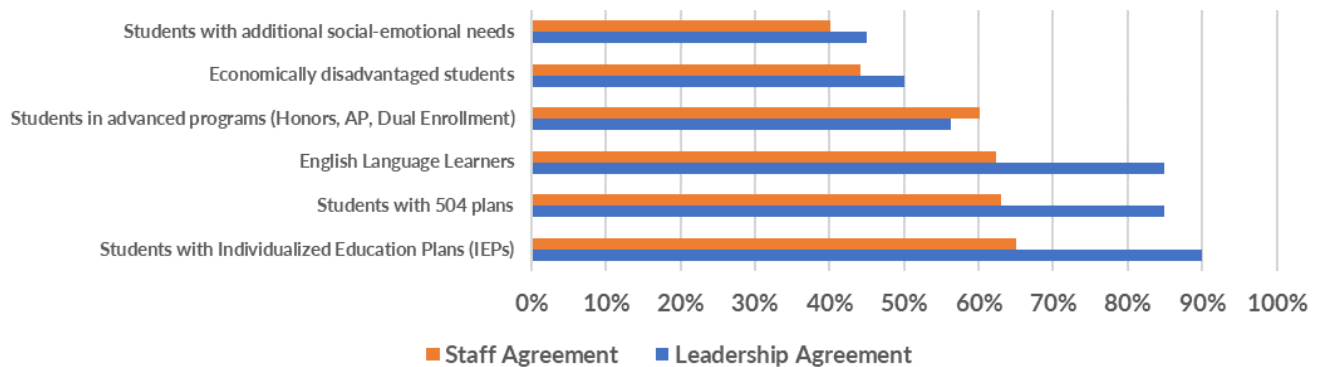
The district utilizes standardized testing to determine student needs for special education and English Language Learner programs. Special education and English language learner programs utilize student-level data to identify student learning placements. The special education manual states, "Upon receiving the signed consent from the parent/guardian, Mansfield Public Schools shall complete the accepted evaluations for the student within thirty (30) school days. Assessments must be administered by trained staff in the language and form most likely to yield accurate information regarding what the child knows and can do academically, developmentally, and social/emotionally (if this is a concern) and functionally unless it is not feasible to do so. For students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) or who are English Language Learners (ELL), Mansfield Public Schools must first assess the student's proficiency in English and their native language proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and comprehending before conducting a special education evaluation." Responding to the prompt of how the District monitors students with disabilities progress towards IEP goals, staff responded *"very tedious IEP progress reports. At high school, behavior charts, data analysis, day-to-day data", "we also do progress reports, and in my class we have fluency checks every week {using} cold readings....I have a big book of data that makes progress reports easier."*

The English language learner manual has a three-step process to identify English language learners, including 1) administering a home language survey (HLS) to all newly enrolled students, 2) screening the English proficiency of a student when the answer to any of the questions on the HLS is a language other than English, and 3) determine whether the student is an EL using screening test results and make an initial placement decision.

Although the District has clear processes and procedures for identifying and assessing special education and English learner students, disaggregated data is not consistently used for all student populations. Survey evidence to validate these claims is presented below. Leadership and staff data showed differences in perception of effective data identification and assessment for English Learner students, students with 504 plans, and students with IEPs. However, around 45% of leadership and staff agreed that there were clear data processes for the identification and assessment of students with additional needs and economically disadvantaged students. When asked about data disaggregation training, less than 30% of district leadership felt they were adequately trained to identify support for students from marginalized populations. Less than 30% of staff also felt they were adequately trained to use data to support economically disadvantaged, marginalized, and students with additional social-emotional needs.

Figure AG: Leadership and staff response

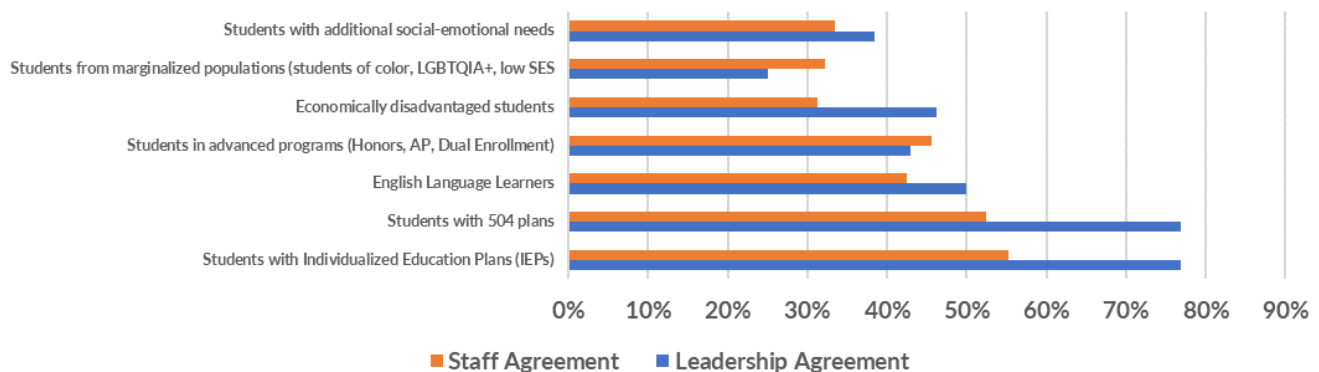
The district has clear systems and structures for the identification and assessment of students needing specialized services, including:



*As indicated by an "Agree" response to the item.

Figure AH: Leadership and staff response

I have sufficient training in and access to disaggregated student data to adjust and differentiate my school's instructional and/or student support practices for the following subgroups:



*As indicated by an "Agree" response to the item.

Mansfield Public Schools is developing a practice of using data to establish and progress monitor improvement efforts and strategic priorities at multiple levels.

Leaders and staff at multiple levels acknowledge that data is important and express a need for a stronger data culture and greater use of student data to inform district decisions and teaching strategies. District leaders and the school committee have initiated some efforts to understand the experiences of marginalized populations, but there is not yet a shared understanding of all gaps and needs. Teachers expressed a need for more professional development around data usage. One teacher noted, *“the way I use data in my classroom versus in the school is different. In class, I am walking around and talking to a child to figure out what they need at the moment and how it will build. In the school we are asked to collect information in a spreadsheet, and we go to SST meetings and look at it, but not sure we are doing much with it. Maybe a time issue, staffing, not sure. In the classroom, I feel comfortable. I don’t know how we could use data differently or look at it differently to do better.”* District and school leadership (37.50%) and staff (17.30%) indicated on surveys that they desired professional learning opportunities in data analysis and data-driven decision-making.

Staff consistently describe data sharing and discussions within the district as an area for improvement. There is limited information on how data is consistently used to identify gaps among marginalized students and specific district challenges. As noted by district leadership, *“There is no data to support student equity-wise. I am not looking at a lot of data that supports differences in students’ cultures. We are starting to use more data to drive decision making in classrooms and for who gets additional support.”* and *“The next step is getting an understanding of who we are and exactly what our challenges are, so we aren’t throwing darts. Get the true understanding of who we are, and where we are going. Not invent problems we don’t have.”* District staff have also expressed a need for data to be used as a basis for district decisions, as noted, *“Really hoping to understand where we are now, what our demographics are. Not saying we are targeting our recruitment in any way because I hire the best person for the job. But maybe we look elsewhere...I don’t have that information so I don’t know how to target efforts.”* Staff members have an interest in understanding specific gaps in data, including staff hiring data *“The next step is getting an understanding of who we are and exactly what our challenges are, so we aren’t throwing darts. Get the true understanding of who we are, where we are going. Not invent problems we don’t have”* and *“Really hoping to understand where we are now, what are our demographics. Not saying we are targeting our recruitment in any way because I hire the best person for the job. But maybe we look elsewhere...I don’t have that information, so I don’t know how to target my efforts.”*

As noted in Domain 1, there are not yet clear data structures in place for strategic plan monitoring. The district does share progress updates with the School Committee, and there is an opportunity to incorporate greater data use, including disaggregated data, to understand progress. Strategic planning monitoring is important to understand if district policies and teaching strategies are effective. Staff members hinted at this notion when they reported, *“I don’t know the student population’s demographics.”* and *“The HS has PD days with them, and they present them to teachers. I do not know what the monitoring looks like or the impact.”* District leadership, when asked specifically about strategic plan monitoring, reported, *“As a leadership team, with feedback from the school committee. We identified the buckets of the SIP that the districts want to move forward with. We go back to the schools and use our faculty and students to build those plans into those buckets.”*

Currently, the District is moving towards a Multi-Tiered System of Support; there is not yet a district-wide system in place. This implementation is an attempt to move away from the traditional Response to Intervention methods. While the District had a clear plan to streamline data usage, this is also indicative of the inconsistencies in data usage across the District. Evidence of these inconsistencies is triangulated by reports from Central Office staff that the current data system does not follow students throughout their matriculation. Staff and leadership have also expressed a need for consistency in data management. Staff members noted, *“As a district, what will be helpful is a database. Been here 11 years, and it is something we’ve*

struggled with. I will be able to look holistically at a student. Our RTI process has heavily relied on teachers bringing cases to the team. Struggle, though, because there are some teachers we never see at those meetings because some see that team as a pathway to SPED or they want to do it on their own. They feel like if it doesn't lead to IEP, why bother? As a district, I am looking forward to the day when every student has a "baseball card" with multiple stats so that we can make a plan for them" and "We do not use a platform to track. We give period updates to the school committee on progress/completion of goals within the plan." District leadership stated, *"One of the things that we struggle with is we did not have a system that funneled our data into a single stream."*

The District currently employs the Response to Intervention (RTI) as the system to identify student gaps, and many staff share that there is an intent to move towards a more robust system. RTI is used school by school, thus it is not yet a district-wide system. It is important to note that a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) is an effective recommended systematic approach to improving student achievement by focusing on equitable access to behavioral, academic, and social-emotional supports. Evidence of the District transitioning to an MTSS approach was found in focus group data from school leadership, *"All of the schools have robust RTI teams that meet regularly... we started to dabble into a little bit of more of the MTSS multi-tiered system of support. It was a little bit of news to me, and not in a bad way. Hence, I think it's good. Maybe it's a way to make what we have that's working okay become broader.... They started a clarifying question, so I'm working this week and next week with the principals getting them together and saying, okay, where are y'all at it?"* Data usage is limited for teaching strategies. A central office staff member noted, *"We look at data and rank students in each grade to identify the lowest 20%-25% who are struggling. We have the RTI process in place. A team of 8 people who meet weekly with reading and math interventionists. Look at assessment data and get referrals for our RTI process from classroom teachers who are also administering assessments and collecting informal data on other factors in the classroom."* However, these practices are inconsistent. Another staff member noted, *"I think that our RTI program at the high school provides time and space to get homework done without doing much data collection."*

Survey data to validate these claims are presented below.

60% of District Leaders **AGREE** that the district has an effective monitoring system to identify and support students who need additional support (attendance, academics behavior, social-emotional, on-track-to-graduate, etc.) to engage and succeed.

DOMAIN 9: SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

School Management: District policies, structures, and systems enable school leaders to create the school-level conditions that align people, time, program, and money to ensure the success of all students.

Decision-making is a collaborative process among MPS leadership. Leaders feel supported by their supervisors and the Superintendent.

Support from the District is key, but the structure also leaves room for autonomous school leadership and function to address each school's areas of improvement and how school-level conditions—including people, time, budget, programs, and policies—are leveraged to do so.

- For example, School leaders said that the District sets priorities, and within that overarching plan, schools set their priorities. *"As a leadership team, with feedback from the school committee, we identified the buckets of the SIP that the districts want to move forward with. We go back to the schools and use our faculty and students to build those plans into those buckets."* This flexibility (supporting school-based autonomy) allows school leaders to target resources to the school's needs and growth areas.
- School leaders collaborate with the district, staff, and students to create SIP Plans. *"As a leadership team, with feedback from the school committee, we identified the buckets of the SIP that the districts want to move forward with. We go back to the schools and use our faculty and students to build those plans into those buckets."*
- School leaders shared an example of being a part of the process to work towards successful implementation and desired outcomes. *"The process starts with the district's visions and initiatives. We are a part of those discussions. It is bottom-up. Our needs are different in each building. Each school can articulate its unique needs. It is not all top-down."*
- Central Office staff named that the budget process includes community input and is driven by principals' and department leaders' needs/requests. However, there seems to be some intentionality with moving to cover essential supports in the general budget rather than temporary grant funds (e.g., interventionists). *"Starting in October, we send budget sheets to principals. Department heads at the secondary level are involved, and they should be reaching down to teachers and school councils. They present what they need. We get a draft budget for each school and dept. Have 1:1 meetings and discussions. The goal is to support every budget, but sometimes the town gives us a lower increase than we expected. They give us a level service budget. And we adjust. We ask if you could add something, what would it be? (e.g., another nurse. We will add if we can. We haven't really had to make cuts here."* Principals have some autonomy over their budget. *"We give principals flexibility more on the expense side than the staffing side. There is a line they can't go over. On the supply side, there is flexibility."*
- School leaders also have the flexibility to develop building schedules that include time for staff's professional learning experiences. Regarding programming and time allocations, one leader shared: *"We have complete control over our schedule... We have worked hard to develop our PLCs [professional learning communities] while providing students with enrichment opportunities while teachers are learning."* Another discussed how they use a menu of learning experiences for teachers: *"We have a lot of autonomy, and yet we adhere to time on learning. What we have tried to do recently—a similar structure to PLC times and our teams—are meetings about the same things on a rotational basis."*
- Principals have the flexibility to create staff configurations, design positions, hire candidates, and

implement an induction process in alignment with the school's instructional model and needs. *"In terms of attracting, recruiting, and hiring new staff, I feel like we participate in job fairs each spring. We post for positions early in the spring if we know there is a need for next year. We post at the end of March. We are pretty much able to establish interview committees at our school. We run through the process with the superintendent, such as interview questions, which the folks are on the committee. We have candidates after the interview. We might invite them to teach a lesson. We do the homework and forward it to the superintendent for final approval."*

The autonomy school leaders have around time, money, program, and people means that schools in the District have the conditions necessary to support students and teachers at the school level, as leaders understand and subsequently respond to their school's needs, particularly regarding classroom instruction.

There are mechanisms in place to monitor progress towards school improvement plan implementation and student outcomes, but there are not yet explicit, measurable goals and key performance indicators for tracking outcomes and implementation. In addition, there aren't clear data-driven structures for accountability and school improvement.

In June 2018, the superintendent created a written report entitled Strategy for District Improvement in regards to the progress development of their four strategic objectives on Teaching and Learning, Social, Emotional, Academic Supports, Family and Community Partnerships, and Collaborate for Continual Learning. It lists each school's Strategic Initiative, Actions & Activities Responsible, Individuals in charge, and the Evidence of Progress within each strategic objective by priority. The plan prioritizes students and includes a priority on equitable and inclusive practices. There is the intentional alignment of school and district efforts and coherence.

While SIPs support principals and align priorities across schools, they do not yet hold schools and school leaders accountable for demonstrating progress on student success indicators, particularly for marginalized student populations. SIPs largely focused on activities, inputs, and implementation rather than SMART goals with time-bound progress measures and measurable student outcomes targets. There are opportunities to strengthen the use of the SIP in holding everyone accountable for improvement if there are measurable targets and everyone knows what they are working towards. At this time, as previewed in Domain 8, it is unclear how much data practices at the school level are consistently examining and focusing on marginalized students' academic and non-academic success compared to their non-marginalized peers through an MTSS program or early warning system. Multiple school leaders open responses, when asked to "describe any district or school policies, systems, or structures that you believe should be re-examined to ensure they equitably support the success of all students, particularly marginalized populations." Still, it wasn't clear if they felt they could/should drive those changes on their own: *"I think our students would benefit from a consistent support class, the majority of students report a need for time and extra help, but we have limited options to address needs for students not on a plan. We have been looking at how students are recommended for course selection, and I believe continuing to review that data would be essential but requires time and support - as well as larger group/ department conversations about access. I think this may be difficult, but possibly a set of consistent practices for instruction across classrooms/grade levels that ensure equitability. People need to know what this looks like in a classroom."*

There is some evidence of monitoring school progress through progress reports to the School Committee. In a June 2021 impact on learning presentation, individual schools presented evidence of steps taken from

last year and positive outcomes. The information presented varied from school to school, with many outcomes listed that were predominately anecdotal and qualitative in nature, e.g., “didn't go as deep into the content of force” and “covered curriculum.” A few schools included measurable progress updates, e.g., “68% of Grade X students scored at or above benchmark on the test of oral reading fluency compared to 84% of students who were at or above benchmark in 2018 and 2019.”

As referenced in Domain 8, the district has a process for identifying and monitoring the needs of students with individualized education plans (IEPs), students with 504 plans, English Language Learners, students in advanced programs (Honors, AP, Dual Enrollment), economically disadvantaged students, and students with additional social-emotional needs. Most leaders agree that the district has an effective monitoring system to identify and support students with additional needs.

Feedback and evaluation practices are another way schools, school leaders, and staff are held accountable for student success. Leaders feel supported and collaborate weekly as a leadership team with the Superintendent. In addition, school leaders follow the state evaluation process, and the Superintendent evaluates school leaders. Principals report that the evaluation processes for Assistant Principals are less formal and realize there is a gap in the performance of economically disadvantaged and mainstream students. Still, school and district leaders did not consistently share explicit examples of how they are proactively addressing those gaps.

Mechanisms are currently in place to support leaders in explicitly focusing directly on applying equity and inclusion professional learning practices. However, they are primarily informal and subjective. *“Our office also strategically sends out information about courses that align with our strategic plan. We pay for teachers to get SEI endorsement so we can more broadly place ELs across. Another thing is we have 4-5 early release days, which includes PD, some element of training, and staff collaboration. We also have one full DP day and All Means All inclusion workshops.”* The superintendent believes that professional development is a way to improve student outcomes. *“My hope is leadership training sessions will help leaders help teachers to support all students.”*

A shared sense of accountability is crucial to ensuring the success of all students. Yet, disaggregated data would more acutely delineate individual student success and the overall student success of marginalized populations. School and district leaders recognize this gap in how they and school staff hold themselves and others accountable for implementing equity-informed practices and behaviors. One leader said: *“Some efforts to ensure the success of all students, but room to improve. We have systems in place to support students who are struggling. We do not have a system to seek out marginalized students.”* The superintendent sees her entire leadership team as one - principal, assistant principals, director of health services, SPED, and facilities. It is unclear how the principal role is clearly defined from other leadership roles and what that means for accountability.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

This section of the report details the recommendations resulting from key equity audit findings.

About the Recommendations

Recommendations delineate the next steps that the district can take to create greater equity, access, and opportunity for all students, staff, and families in the Mansfield Public Schools. The recommendations contain suggested, and research-informed suggested next steps—immediate, short term, and long term—and considerations for the district as it pursues a more equitable learning and work environment that is fully accessible and inclusive of all students, staff, families, and the district community.

For each overarching recommendation, this section includes potential key activities and considerations for the district to explore as they think through strategic planning and implementation, as well as research, national best practices, and successful practices already present in MPS.

A few things to note about the recommendations:

- Recommendations and implementation actions were designed with the district’s context in mind, acknowledging staff capacity, resources, existing initiatives, and timelines.
- Recommendations are not quick fixes but rather parts of a series of intentional actions among stakeholders to recognize access barriers and design solutions to dismantle systems, structures, policies, practices, and mindsets that create and support them.
- Recommendations are intended to be sequenced and prioritized through the strategic planning process. Mass Insight recognizes that change efforts are most impactful and sustainable when they are thoughtfully implemented over time with broader community input and involvement.
- The recommendations in the Vision, Strategy & Culture priority area are critical and necessary for the success of all other recommendations. A district-wide commitment to equity and a collective equity lens 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 the district and school leaders, is essential to sustain equity-focused improvement efforts.

Recommendations for MPS to Strengthen Equity and Inclusion Resulting from the Equity Audit

1. Build a shared understanding of and investment in MPS’ vision for equity and establish collective accountability systems and structures to ensure progress towards the desired future state.
2. Provide professional learning/development opportunities and ongoing support for stakeholders to develop their skills and comfort in engaging in courageous conversations about race, diversity, and discrimination.
3. Develop a shared language, approach, and resources for ensuring culturally responsive and linguistically sustaining classrooms.
4. Develop strategic new approaches to attract, recruit, hire, and retain more diverse and representative staff in all positions.
5. Develop a data management plan, key performance indicators, and practices to create an equity-centered data-informed culture throughout the District.
6. Establish a comprehensive, evidence-based Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) program.
7. Build genuine relationships with families and community partners by establishing alternatives to traditional communication channels. Consider the experiences of marginalized communities and families during district decision-making.

Recommendation 1: Build a shared understanding of and investment in MPS' vision for equity and establish collective accountability systems and structures to ensure progress towards the desired future state.

Research⁴ shows “people will be accountable and committed to what they have a hand in creating.” MPS leadership has committed to pursuing greater equity and inclusion, and there is an opportunity to engage and invest in others in the district's equity journey. Creating and sustaining momentum around this commitment will require building shared understanding and investment, shifting mindsets, and holding everyone accountable for achieving the district's goals. This recommendation is both about the technical (*e.g., set definitions, including equity in the vision*) and the adaptive (*changing mindsets, communication, etc.*). By defining and using shared language around what DEI means in MPS, how the district aims to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion, and how MPS will know that progress is being made, MPS can create greater organizational coherence, transparency, and accountability in partnership with its community.

Key activities and steps might include:

- **Create clear and comprehensive equity-focused district mission and vision statements and a theory of action for leading for equity.** Leverage leadership team collaboration to create or revise the equity-centered district “mission and vision” and engage others in input and feedback loops. The district currently has a “vision” on its website and core values in its Strategic Improvement Plan. There is no “mission statement,” and “equity” and/or “marginalized populations” are not explicitly referenced. Additionally, a strong theory of change/action allows a district to connect strategy to expected outcomes explicitly and provides a through which you can prioritize and guide decision-making. When inevitable questions and challenges arise, you'll clearly understand what is and is not aligned with your strategy. These items also support staff and the community in interpreting and understanding district actions' what and why.
- **Incorporate stakeholder feedback to revise local DEI definitions.** MPS has draft definitions of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that are tailored to district context and community. Stakeholders shared feedback on these definitions during the equity audit process, and there is an opportunity to incorporate feedback from the broader community to revise MPS-specific DEI definitions.
- **Set key performance indicators and measurable goals to help leaders and community members understand progress towards the district's equity vision.** Define KPIs for district and school plans. Please reference Recommendation 5 for more on establishing data management plans.
 - Potential resources for defining measurable goals and identifying leading and lagging progress indicators include [MA DESE Guidance for Planning](#) and [Beyond Test Scores](#).
- **Communicate and gather additional community input and feedback on the district mission, vision, theory of action, DEI definitions, and plan goals. Bring others along in the journey by:**
 - Posting the new “mission and vision” on the website and other public areas
 - Ensuring materials can be accessed and understood by all stakeholders (*e.g., in multiple languages, in multiple modalities, etc.*)
 - Equipping leaders to communicate about the MPS equity journey and beliefs in ways that build collective responsibility for improving the experiences, access, and outcomes of all MPS students, families, and staff
- **Establish shared criteria and processes for applying a data-driven equity lens to decision-making and resource allocations.** Build from the clearly defined and collaborative processes already in place for making decisions to norm on how MPS will keep equity at the forefront. For example, this may include setting and monitoring measurable benchmarks, guardrails, and best practices to maintain and communicate equity in resource allocations (*e.g., If school X serves Y% more high-needs students, what does that mean for how we allocate resources?*).

⁴ Block, Peter (2018). *Community: The Structure of Belonging*. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Recommendation 2: Provide professional learning/development opportunities and ongoing support for stakeholders to develop their skills and comfort in engaging in courageous conversations about race, diversity, and discrimination.

Professional development learning experiences that increase courageous conversation capacity and skills are more adaptive than technical. Professional learning for facilitating courageous conversations about sticky topics such as race, diversity, and discrimination develops over time and through adaptive and interpersonal interactions. This includes providing opportunities for all District stakeholders—including leaders, educators, support staff, students, families, and school committee members—to become comfortable having courageous conversations in identity-based and mixed groups through small and large group settings. The following recommendations suggest actions and provide resources for creating professional development opportunities for stakeholders to develop their skills and comfort by engaging in courageous conversations about race, diversity, and discrimination.

Key activities and steps might include:

- **Increase comfort levels and be better prepared to engage in conversations about and across lines of difference through leveraging resources and support systems.** Shifts in beliefs and practices often take time. Supporting stakeholders in developing their skills in having courageous conversations is vital. Providing a safe space that allows stakeholders to grow at their own pace can help to sustain the implementation of equity goals. Some resources to get started include:
 - [“Five Ways to Have Better Conversations Across Difference,”](#) an article from Greater Good Magazine
 - [Courageous Conversations](#), an organization that trains, coaches, and supports organizations in developing and sustaining diverse, equitable, and inclusive institutions
 - [Continuing Courageous Conversations](#), a toolkit for organizations
 - [The Cost of the Conversation Gap](#) on the Workplace, a Whitepaper on having tough conversations in the workplace
 - [Fixed ability mindset and racial achievement gaps](#), a journal article from NIH
 - [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning](#), a website with resources to support adult social, emotional, and cultural competence
- **Create a system of tracking for accessibility and accountability for professional development of all staff** to ensure alignment with the equity goals of the district (e.g., *tracking conferences, PD, setting aligned and measurable PD goals, etc.*). This will help to ensure that all staff are aware of and have access to ongoing training and development that aligns with MPS pursuit of becoming a more equitable school district.
- **Create a diversity, equity, and inclusion/culturally responsive team** to focus on supporting schools and sustaining the diversity, equity, and inclusion policies and initiatives. Teams can help build collective responsibility for the work, as well as provide more representation and voice.
- **Engage with partners to support the courageous conversations journey.** Developing comfort, skill, and mindsets for engaging in conversations regarding equity, identity, race, and discrimination is challenging. It can be helpful to have external partners and experts support districts in building capacity. This can include continuing existing DEI partnerships and/or developing new ones.
- **Create and communicate a clear system and safe space for reporting acts of discrimination.** Develop and communicate a documented process that is easily accessible to all stakeholders, including, but not limited to, district leadership, staff, students, and families. Assess and improve the accessibility and use of these systems regularly.
- **Create an ongoing training schedule with specific calendar dates or timelines** to assist with accountability and ensure equitable access to professional development/learning opportunities.
- **Provide online and asynchronous professional learning opportunities for educators and leaders.** Multiple modalities of delivering professional learning increase access and engagement.

Recommendation 3. Develop a shared language, approach, and resources for ensuring all students have access to rigorous, culturally responsive, and linguistically sustaining classrooms.

Culturally responsive teaching is an approach that challenges educators to recognize that each student brings strengths and various identities into the classroom that should be leveraged to make learning experiences more relevant and effective. Adopting culturally responsive teaching practices goes beyond celebrating students' cultural traditions yearly. Instead, educators who practice culturally responsive teaching set rigorous learning objectives for all of their students and continually build helpful bridges between what students need to learn and their cultural heritage, lived realities, and the issues they care about. The following recommendations suggest actions and provide resources for developing a shared language, approach, and resources for ensuring culturally responsive and linguistically sustaining classrooms.

Key activities and steps might include:

- **Develop and implement ongoing professional learning opportunities that strengthen educators' skills and capacity for culturally responsive and linguistically sustaining instruction.** Professional learning is common and consistent practice across the District, and staff consistently name the ability to choose PD opportunities as a strength. To build from this foundation, ensure coherence and support all staff to develop cultural competencies. By developing an "Equity in Action" framework, MPS can create a shared understanding of district principles guiding professional learning experiences to foster inclusivity. An "Equity in Action" framework could include:
 - **A statement detailing why equity matters in alignment with District improvement goals and initiatives.** The creation of this public statement could be led and co-constructed by staff and representatives of District stakeholders and explicitly speak to why implementing culturally responsive, linguistically sustaining, and inclusive instructional practices are important for every student.
 - **Principles of professional learning to prepare culturally responsive teachers to work for equity in formal and informal learning environments.** This could include deepening the work of personal growth toward cultural competence for teachers, paraprofessionals, support staff, and school and District leaders. In addition, preparing staff to understand and adopt culturally responsive knowledge, attitudes, and skills during professional learning experiences can help bridge the gap between instructional delivery and approaches to teaching and learning.
 - **Descriptions and examples of what culturally responsive classrooms look and sound like across grade levels and content areas.** Culturally responsive teaching relates to how classroom environments and practices look, sound, and feel to best meet the needs of each student. Create a resource bank with videos, handouts, and modules aligned to culturally responsive teaching. When integrated into classroom instruction, culturally responsive instructional strategies offer students significant benefits such as: strengthening students' sense of identity, broadening students' understanding of others' identities, promoting equity and inclusivity in the classroom, engaging students in the course material by making it relatable, and supporting critical thinking.
- **Seek opportunities to diversify curriculum, materials, and resources.** Utilizing diverse materials and resources increases student engagement and a sense of belonging. This action may be suitable for PLCs and/or grade level teams to undertake based on content areas.
- **Provide equitable opportunities for students to participate in advanced coursework.** This includes providing the support needed for students to be successful in the advanced courses. Begin by examining data for trends and/or exclusionary practices in student access to advanced coursework and dual enrollment courses. In addition, examine advanced course success rates of students in marginalized populations, including those with IEPs and/or 504 plans.

Recommendation 4: Develop strategic new approaches to attract, recruit, hire, and retain more diverse and representative staff in all positions.

A key indicator of a district's commitment to equity is its efforts to diversify staff to reflect its student enrollment better. Through interviews and surveys, staff, students, and families identified increasing the diversity of district employees as a district priority. The following recommendations suggest actions and provide resources for diversifying staff at all levels and all positions.

Key activities and steps might include:

- **Form an HR Diversification Advisory Committee:** Create a Diversification Advisory Committee to provide guidance and feedback for a District-wide strategic initiative to attract, recruit, cultivate, hire, and retain more diverse staff. Committee members should represent a variety of stakeholders, including school leaders, union representatives, teachers, paraprofessionals, support staff, family members, students, members of the Coalition for Equity, and community members with expertise in marketing and advertising. Special attention should be made to ensure diverse identities beyond committee members' roles or interests in diversity, equity, and inclusion. In addition to the following suggestions below, the Diversification Advisory Committee could also support the development of advertising and recruitment materials in both online and hard copy formats.
- **Revise District and school HR policies, practices, and protocols:**
 - Revise the District's Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention Plan and provide training to school hiring teams
 - Revise District and school's screening and interviewing questions: School-based hiring teams, with the support of HR staff, should revise their screening and interview protocols to ensure alignment with the District's updated Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention Plan. Resources to support this process include:
 - [Promising Recruitment, Selection, and Retention Strategies: For a Diverse Massachusetts Teaching Force](#) pages 37-53
 - [Here's How Districts Are Screening for Racial Biases During Teacher Job Interviews](#)
 - Clarify and communicate processes for staff to access accommodations, report acts of discrimination, and receive needed supports
 - Create a Teacher Mentor Program for new and first-year teachers who enter the district to receive support
- **Develop a 2-4 year Staff Diversification Action Plan:** Develop an action plan for recruiting, hiring, developing, and retaining more diverse staff over the next 2-4 years. The Diversification Action Plan should include action steps, responsible staff and contacts, timelines, budgetary support, and key performance indicators (KPIs) for monitoring implementation and impact progress. The Diversification Action Plan would serve as a running record of activities and accomplishments and identify areas where there are opportunities to improve the workforce development process to meet District goals. Sample KPIs that would support measuring the District's success at hiring might include annual goals around:
 - a percent of applicants who identify as people of color or with other dimensions of diversity;
 - a percent of applicants invited to interview who identify as people of color or with other dimensions of diversity;
 - a percent of applicants who were finalists for their position who identify as people of color or with other dimensions of diversity; and
 - a percent of hires who identify as people of color or with other dimensions of diversity.
- **Expand the District's recruitment network through outreach and partnerships:**

- Community organizations. Culturally-based organizational partners can share employment opportunities with their members.
 - [The India Society of Worcester](#)
 - [The Brazilian American Center \(BRACE\)](#)
 - [The Latino Education Institute](#) at Worcester State University
- College and university schools of education. The District is located near several colleges of education whose undergraduate and graduate programs are sources for pipeline development, outreach, recruitment, as well as continuing education and certification programs.
 - [American International College](#)
 - [Assumption College](#)
 - [Bay Path University](#)
 - [Clark University](#)
 - [Elms College](#)
 - [Holy Cross](#)
 - [Springfield College](#)
 - [Worcester State University](#)

The development of District and college and university relationships could support recruitment efforts and student-teacher experiences, resulting in the hiring of incoming staff who have already spent time in District schools. College and university relationships could also serve to increase the District's substitute teacher and tutoring pool, allowing pre-service teachers an opportunity for school-based experiences before graduation.

Recommendation 5: Develop a data management plan, key performance indicators, and practices to create an equity-centered data-informed culture throughout the District.

Data-driven decision-making creates a common language and process around the use of data, removing subjectivity and blame and instead creating the opportunity to see trends and make informed decisions about the next steps. Data is particularly powerful in an equity-focused culture where stakeholders are looking to see what works, what doesn't work, for whom, and under what conditions. Data is also particularly powerful when disaggregated or sorted in such a way that allows people to see differentiated outcomes and impact. The following recommendations suggest actions and provide resources for developing a data management plan, key performance indicators, and practices to create an equity-centered data-informed culture throughout the District.

Key activities and steps might include:

- **Develop a data management plan (DMP) that includes key performance indicators (KPIs) at all levels.** A data management plan (DMP) could coordinate District and school efforts to systematize and operationalize how data is collected, analyzed, and used to support District and school plans and actions and how staff at all levels leverage data to inform their practice and the student experience. In addition to naming KPIs, the DMP could also include protocols for managing data operations and practices at and among all organizational levels: school committees, District, elementary, middle, and high schools. The DMP will ensure the following:
 - District information systems or dashboards that are current, accurate, and used by school and District staff to inform decisions (e.g., consider leveraging and aligning with MA DESE data best practices and [District Data Team Toolkit](#));
 - a master list of quantitative and qualitative data and a schedule of data collection, uploading, and analyses;
 - disaggregated data points across multiple variables to understand performance and success rates, as well as identify any opportunity and access gaps and their changes over time; and
 - leveled protocols for regularly examining disaggregated District, school, and student data that identify and address disparities in school, staff, and student performance and access and that report on outcomes for improving metrics for the achievement and performance of marginalized students. Common protocols would ensure that data discussions—from school-based professional learning communities (PLCs) to school committee meetings—use common language and processes, resulting in more consistent analyses and data-informed decisions. Two common protocols to support data analysis are [Collaborative Inquiry](#) and [Data Wise](#).
- **Continue to invest in the development of staff data and analysis skills.** As indicated in the Domain 8 Findings, staff acknowledge the need for further development of data analysis and data-driven decision-making skills. The contents of this Recommendation add more professional learning opportunities as systems, protocols, and practices are initiated and aligned across the District at different levels. When designing new professional learning opportunities, some considerations include:
 - Designing professional learning opportunities so staff can earn Professional Development Points (PDPs) for license recertification. For example, if the District designed a series of data analysis and application skills that amounted to 10 hours, bundling the sessions could meet state criteria for PDPs.
 - Ensuring staff beyond principals, teachers, and District administrators have access to these professional learning opportunities, including paraprofessionals, school committee members, and support staff interacting with student- and District-level data.
 - Providing ongoing coaching or support as staff learn and acquire new skills for analyzing and using disaggregated qualitative and quantitative data to inform decisions.

- Using pre-existing structures (such as PLCs, leadership team meetings, and school committee work sessions) and pre-established professional development days for data system and analysis skill development. Alternatively, leverage substitutes for half-day grade-level or content-area staff teams to collaboratively engage in the data system and analysis learning opportunities.
- Capturing videos and artifacts of data practices of staff teams already using data to make informed decisions.
- Creating opportunities for small groups of staff to collect and collaboratively analyze data related to a shared problem of practice.
- Providing different modes for professional learning opportunities, such as all staff, school teams, individually-designed sessions, partner or train-the-trainer models, and District-created self-guided online learning.

Specific data analysis and decision-making professional learning topics may include:

- Navigating data dashboards
- The what, why, and how of data analysis protocols
- What are KPIs, and what are we doing with them
- Collecting and analyzing qualitative data to inform decisions
- MTSS: Our school's process, protocols, and our collective approach
- How to engage families in data discussions about their children
- How to engage students in data discussions

Recommendation 6: Establish a comprehensive, evidence-based Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) program.

MPS' stated vision is: "Our vision of the ideal school is one in which all students are actively and intellectually engaged in their learning as a result of the instructional practices that are personalized, differentiated, innovative, and designed to challenge their thinking and understanding. The result of our collective efforts is for all students to achieve their personal best and become meaningful contributors to our society." There are already a number of positive initiatives designed to better meet the needs of all students, and there is a desire and intent to move towards a more comprehensive, evidence-based MTSS program. A strong system for understanding and addressing the holistic needs of children and families on a variety of measures can be powerful in helping the district improve equity and inclusion.

Key activities and steps might include:

- **Assess current program strengths and state and national best practices, and develop a plan for moving from school-based RTI systems to a robust MTSS program.**
 - Research MA and national MTSS best practices, models, and resources. Utilize the state of Massachusetts' [MTSS resources](#) and the [Center for MTSS resources](#) for guidance and support to align with MTSS best practices.
 - Engage staff, students, and families to inventory what schools are currently doing, best practices, and areas of need.
 - Define shared parameters and expectations for a district-wide MTSS program.
 - Plan for MTSS program development, rollout, and implementation that thoughtfully sequences steps over time.
- **Explore and adopt data platforms that support MTSS, such as Illuminate Education Data, and train staff.** Efforts are currently underway to create data dashboards that will support the collection and use of student data. This is a big undertaking to collect and organize various data sets strategically.
 - While it would be ideal to have one dashboard that provides access to all key data indicators, pulling publicly-available dashboard and internal data could be redundant and complicated. Instead, clarity about where data is housed could support a quicker and more internally-focused data dashboard while still using existing external dashboards and data collection systems. In addition, other dashboards likely exist at the school and classroom levels, either as part of curricular resources or what is already used among content-area or grade-level teams.
 - To support the evolution of data dashboards that serve the monitoring needs of staff at various levels, consider biannual opportunities to gather user feedback on how the dashboards support data-driven decision-making discussions and how dashboards can be improved.
 - Continue to train and support staff to implement the program as planned.
- **Incorporate and align both academic and non-academic supports to meet a variety of students needs. As part of this, examine discipline practices and seek to establish more restorative practices to decrease disproportionate numbers of suspensions and expulsions.**
 - Research and implement equitable and restorative practices in [discipline](#).
 - Examine beliefs and practices concerning students - [growth mindset](#).
 - Create systems and structures monitoring on-track indicators and grade-level.

Recommendation 7: Build genuine relationships with families and community partners by establishing alternatives to traditional communication channels. Consider the experiences of marginalized communities and families during district decision-making.

Strong partnership among families and district staff are important for strengthening a range of student outcomes including academic, social, and emotional. Using multiple, non-traditional methods for connecting with families allows for *all* families to communicate and engage with the District to support student learning. Authentic and tailored communication among families help communicate the District's vision and empower families to develop relationships with school leaders and staff. It is important to explore and use different methods to reach and engage with all families and to use community partnerships to strengthen community ties.

Key activities and steps might include:

- **Build a shared vision for strong and inclusive partnerships with families in MPS.** Engage families in developing a vision that aligns with their needs and desires. Set clear staff expectations for what successful outreach and engagement looks like at all levels (school, central office, leadership, school committee). Establish measurable targets for family engagement and partnership. Potential resources from MA DESE include: [Strengthening Partnerships - Family Engagement Framework](#) and [Massachusetts Family, School, and Community Partnership Fundamentals](#).
- **Create more opportunities for students and family voices in decision-making.** Continue to examine policies regularly using student and family surveys or other data to assess and improve their inclusivity and equity. Use survey data to make informed district decisions for families and students. Communicate how student and family voices inform decision-making, and provide ongoing opportunities for two-way communication. Consider the following resources: [Family School Community and Partnerships, Including Voice in Education](#), and [The Power of Student Voice in Education Innovation](#).
- **Continue to explore alternative traditional methods to reach out to and engage all families (e.g., zoom meetings, community organization liaison meetings, reaching families in community spaces).** Proactively, and through multiple modes, reach out to families of marginalized students and English learner students. For example, increase time/opportunities for families to understand and support student academic progress (e.g., multiple avenues for family conferences), make parent and student communications available in other languages for access, and anticipate the experiences of families of English Language Learner in all communications to increase District access. Support all staff to understand which communication and engagement approaches to use in which scenarios, and plan for follow up steps to take if initial outreach efforts are unsuccessful in reaching all families.
- **Expand and leverage community relationships and resources to meet student, family, and school needs.** Community partners shared largely positive feedback on MPS. Build from these foundations to develop more community partnerships, and ensure culturally and linguistically appropriate relationships are established among schools, families, and communities. Work with partners to communicate with families, understand how to best meet their needs, and to build a sense of community and belonging.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, we commend Mansfield Public Schools (MPS) on their commitment to furthering equity and inclusion for all students, families, and staff. We believe MPS is well-poised to build from strong foundations to continue to understand and address inequities and create a more inclusive experience for all students, families, and staff in the MPS community.

MPS is poised to chart a new and more equitable, accessible, and inclusive course for the district and its stakeholder communities. Recent national and world events, including the COVID-19 pandemic and racial protests and injustices, have brought to light the extent of systemic inequalities and inequities in our country. While many are beyond the scope of school systems to address, educational systems are also wrought with unequal and inequitable structures, policies, and practices.

The district has committed to continuing its equity journey and taking a thoughtful approach to planning a pathway forward that acknowledges local context. We recognize that committing to an equity audit and strategic planning with a focus on equity are bold and important steps in understanding strengths and opportunities to improve relative to equity and inclusion that are foundational to change. Through this audit process, we were able to share data and understand the lived experiences and perspectives of MPS stakeholders to ensure that the voices of students, families, and staff inform the district's next steps.

Recommendations were designed with the district's context in mind, acknowledging staff capacity, resources, existing initiatives, and timelines. Recommendations are not quick fixes but rather parts of a series of intentional actions among stakeholders to recognize access barriers and design solutions to dismantle systems, structures, policies, practices, and mindsets that create and support them. Recommendations are intended to be sequenced and prioritized through the strategic planning process.

To build from areas of strength and address gaps and inequities, Mass Insight recommends that MPS:

1. Build a shared understanding of and investment in MPS' vision for equity and establish collective accountability systems and structures to ensure progress towards the desired future state.
2. Provide professional learning/development opportunities and ongoing support for stakeholders to develop their skills and comfort in engaging in courageous conversations about race, diversity, and discrimination.
3. Develop a shared language, approach, and resources for ensuring all students have access to rigorous, culturally responsive, and linguistically sustaining classrooms.
4. Develop strategic new approaches to attract, recruit, hire, and retain more diverse and representative staff in all positions.
5. Develop a data management plan, key performance indicators, and practices to create an equity-centered data-informed culture throughout the District.
6. Establish a comprehensive, evidence-based Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) program.
7. Build genuine relationships with families and community partners by establishing alternatives to traditional communication channels. Consider the experiences of marginalized communities and families during district decision-making.

Efforts to strengthen equity should begin with a clear and coherent **Vision, Strategy & Culture** that prioritizes diversity, equity, and inclusion. These serve as a compass for approaching all other priority areas, as it publicly establishes the district's commitment to equity. For equity to permeate the system, it has to become the individual and collective responsibility and work of everyone in the district, and it has to be reflected in equitable and inclusive policies, practices, and decision-making. To do so, it will be essential for Mansfield Public Schools to maintain a deliberate focus on strengthening stakeholder orientation toward equity, and to build from the great work they have already begun.

APPENDIX

Mass Insight's Highest Performing District Descriptors

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. Our research-informed [Theory of Action](#) describes in greater detail the various aspects of education systems we believe support the structures, policies, practices, and actions necessary for school leaders and staff to develop, implement, and sustain improvements. Our equity audit framework, below, serves as an outline to our process for understanding the current reality and the extent to which equity is experienced by district stakeholders (staff, students, families, partners, and community members).

Domains	Highest Performing District Descriptors
Vision, strategy, and culture: District vision, strategy, culture, and priorities reflect a commitment to educational equity and promote a district-wide culture of inclusiveness and a belief that all students can learn and succeed.	The district has an inclusive organizational culture that welcomes, respects, and values the identities and perspectives of all students, families, staff, and the district community regardless of racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic, sexual orientation, gender, and age differences. District leadership sets and models high expectations, and all district staff accept responsibility for the success of all students and hold each other accountable. The district has a strategic plan aligned to the district mission and vision that addresses district conditions and challenges. The plan explicitly addresses data-informed disparities in student performance and success and provides opportunities for aligned staff development and stakeholder cultivation. Each strategy has a clear theory of action that describes the desired change and expected impact. The district has a process for communicating, managing, and monitoring plan implementation and tracking and reporting on impact.
Accountability for equitable student access and outcomes: Policies, systems, and practices enable all students to fully participate in schools, programs, and activities that result in high comparable outcomes.	District policies, systems, and practices reflect a commitment to equity and accountability for the success of all students, particularly focusing attention on marginalized student populations. Schools are held accountable for ensuring that all students can succeed. In addition to complying with laws and regulations, the district ensures that services for special student populations (e.g. English learners, students with IEPs or 504 plans, and gifted/talented students) are of the highest quality. As data on academic achievement and other student outcomes are disaggregated and analyzed, there is high comparable performance for all identifiable groups of learners, and performance gaps are virtually non-existent. District and school practices reflect ongoing monitoring of disaggregated student success indicators (e.g. early warning system for students' academics, behavior, attendance, etc.), particularly for marginalized populations, and intentional steps are routinely taken to address disparities through a tiered system of supports (e.g. MTSS model). The district differentially supports schools to provide all students with equitable opportunities, including unobstructed entrance, involvement, and full participation (access + inclusion) in all school programs and activities, understanding that not all schools and students need the same support and resources.
Governance and conditions: Clear and equitable school committee/board and central office structures, systems, processes, and practices work together to advance the district	District governance structures prioritize stakeholder equity through the district's vision and strategic plan. The school committee/board and central office regularly examine systems, structures, policies, practices, and data to identify and address inequities and biases. The superintendent and district leadership prioritize the success of marginalized populations in establishing goals, making decisions, and collaboratively organizing support to schools. Central office departments implement clear and equitable structures, systems, processes, and policies for addressing school and student needs, and coordinate services and communication with schools and staff

<p>towards its vision. The district commitment to equity is reflected in governance and central office structures, systems, policies, and practices.</p>	<p>across offices. District departments differentiate supports and conditions (i.e. people, money, time, program) to align with school needs and prioritize marginalized populations. Specifically,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>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.</i> • <i>Principal supervisors are trained in best practices in instructional leadership and coaching and provide principals with high-quality coaching and job-embedded professional development aligned to district and school priorities.</i> • <i>The district uses key performance indicators, including input from school staff, students, and families, to measure the effectiveness of district office functions.</i> • <i>The district supports schools and teachers with the development of instructional practices and curricula that recognize marginalized populations and are inclusive of all students' identities and interests.</i> • <i>The district has an early warning system for ensuring students' academic, behavioral, and social-emotional developmental needs are monitored, identified, and supported internally and/or externally by partners.</i> • <i>The district provides guidance to schools for managing internal and external partnerships and evaluating their effectiveness in supporting student and family needs. Partnerships with local and regional organizations are developed to bridge gaps in outreach and resource allocation.</i>
<p>Focus on culturally and linguistically sustaining teaching and learning: Curriculum, materials, instructional practices, and learning environments ensure school leaders, teachers, and other school staff constantly improve and refine rigorous standards-based pedagogy that recognizes and embraces students' identities and the district's diversity.</p>	<p>The district has a vision and plan for ensuring high-quality, standards-aligned, rigorous instruction for <i>all</i> students in <i>all</i> schools. Instructional staff are professionally developed and have the curricular and instructional resources necessary to deliver instruction that takes place in learning environments designed to be inclusive of and validate students' identities, experiences, needs, and interests, and that connects to students' cultural schema to maximize their learning opportunities. Instructional staff have the time, support, and resources needed to plan culturally and linguistically sustaining units, lessons, and assessments, and the time, support, and resources to use aligned assessment and evaluation data to inform, improve, and refine their instruction. The district has a system of instructional support for schools that prioritizes marginalized student populations to ensure equitable access and opportunity so students receive the necessary academic interventions, enrichment, and remediation programming.</p>
<p>Student readiness to learn: The district and schools create safe, positive, and inclusive learning environments for all students. Students' non-academic needs are proactively addressed so they fully engage and succeed academically.</p>	<p>The district supports schools' implementation of policies, systems, and practices that create positive, inclusive, and welcoming classroom and school environments. Schools and school staff embrace and recognize diversity and students' unique identities. As a result, all students feel safe, valued, cared for, supported, and like they belong in their school.</p> <p>The district and schools have systems and practices to monitor, identify, and address students' social-emotional, engagement, mental health, and developmental needs. Internal processes and structures, as well as partnerships, collaboratively connect and provide students and their families with resources, interventions, and support services to enable all students to fully engage in learning.</p>
<p>Workforce development: Systems and processes attract, recruit, cultivate, hire, and develop new and</p>	<p>The district has a non-discriminatory approach to attract and recruit a highly diverse workforce that is reflective and inclusive of the community and student population. The district and the talent office have a set structure to grow and cultivate prospective hires and coordinate efforts to provide needed testing and certification support. The</p>

<p>diverse staff. All staff receive ongoing professional development that results in the retention of a talented, culturally competent, and diverse workforce.</p>	<p>talent office and school leaders are collaboratively engaged in the recruitment, outreach, interview, and selection process. The talent office accurately forecasts workforce needs and has structures that result in a strong, diverse candidate pool for each opening.</p> <p>The district supports new teachers with induction and mentoring during their initial years in the classroom. District-sponsored professional development is practice-based and differentiated by role, and emphasizes the development of cultural competence. The district has systems for identifying and developing an internal pipeline of school leaders (e.g. principals, assistant principals, instructional coaches, and department chairs) and recognizes staff contributions and high performance. The district encourages and supports the creation and facilitation of inclusive spaces for diverse staff (staff of color, immigrant staff, LGBTQIA+, staff with disabilities, bilingual, etc.). The district provides schools with the necessary resources and tools to create safe and positive work environments that support staff retention. The staff evaluation process recognizes strengths, supports areas of improvement, and monitors cultural competency. The district uses evaluation data to identify, develop, and retain staff aligned with district values.</p>
<p>Family and community engagement: The district and schools intentionally and authentically communicate with and successfully engage students, families, and community members.</p>	<p>The district has multiple strategies for communicating and engaging with students, families, and community members to better understand systemic inequities and the work of creating more inclusive and just educational experiences. District interactions and communication demonstrate cultural competence and respect for linguistic and cultural/ethnic identities and diversity. Student, family, and community input and feedback is routinely sought in multiple ways, analyzed, and used to inform district and school decisions. Family and community communication and cultivation efforts yield increased participation and engagement.</p>
<p>Data: The district utilizes data regularly to identify and address inequities in the system. Disaggregated data is accessible and informs decision-making throughout the district.</p>	<p>District information systems are current, accurate, and used by school and district staff to inform decisions. District departments collect, review, and utilize qualitative and quantitative data to drive district-level decisions and to monitor, identify, and address inequities and disparities in the system. Disaggregated school and student progress data is regularly examined at district and school levels to identify and address disparities in school, staff, and student performance and access. Staff receive training and resources to accurately gather, analyze, and make decisions from qualitative and quantitative data sources.</p>
<p>School management: District policies, structures, and systems enable school leaders to create the school-level conditions that align people, time, program, and money to ensure the success of all students.</p>	<p>District systems support principals in the development of coherent equity-focused school improvement plans (SIPs) that are data informed and support the success and needs of all students and prioritize marginalized populations. Principals are held accountable for both the implementation of their school improvement plans and the success of all students. Principal supervisors work with principals to develop leadership capacity and support ongoing management of SIPs to ensure successful implementation and desired outcomes.</p> <p>Principals have the authority to create staff configurations, design positions, hire candidates, and implement an induction process in alignment with the school's instructional model, needs, and SIP priorities (e.g. principals place high-performing teachers to serve high-needs students).</p> <p>All teachers and support staff receive accurate and specific feedback to improve their professional practice through the evaluation process. Evaluation data is utilized by the principal for staffing decisions (e.g. placement and retention).</p>

	<p>Principals have the authority to make changes to the school schedule to include time for PLCs/CPTs, interventions, and/or other school-based professional development or instructional activities so the school can meet the needs of all students.</p> <p>Principals have sufficient understanding of and control over their budgets so they can allocate resources to meet school and student needs, prioritizing marginalized populations. The school budgeting process is clear, data informed, and differentiated by school needs. The principal has the authority to align the school's financial resources with SIP priorities.</p> <p>The principal has sufficient authority to shape instructional approaches, and the authority to make programmatic choices and select partners and related services to advance the school's mission and meet the needs of all students, prioritizing marginalized populations.</p>
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Note: descriptors contained within the Mass Insight equity audit framework were informed by research and best practices including 1) Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices from Boston Public Schools, and 2) the Intercultural Development Research Association.

Survey Design

Each survey was tailored to its specific stakeholder group, and some questions were shared among several surveys for comparison purposes. District and school staff surveys all contained between three and five identifying questions, such as their primary role, the race with which they self-identify, the ethnicity with which they self-identify, and whether they identify with a marginalized population, all of which respondents were free to select “prefer not to answer” at their discretion. Student surveys similarly asked students how they self-identify racially and ethnically, and also to select their school and grade level, in order for participation rates to be monitored more effectively. Family surveys also asked family members how they self-identify racially and ethnically, the grade level(s) of their student(s), and how long their child(ren) has been enrolled in Mansfield Public Schools.

The remaining 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 Mansfield Public Schools. The majority of survey items were multiple choice, and each survey contained an additional 2-5 open response questions.

The following table provides additional information about each survey:

Survey	Participants	Survey Languages	Number of Survey Items	Estimated Completion Time
District and School Leadership	Central Office Directors, Principal/School Director/SPED Assistant Directors, Assistant Principals	English	54 items	23 minutes
District and School Staff	Teachers, paraprofessionals, Student support service, School-based staff, Central Office Staff	English	54 items	18 minutes
Students	All middle and high school students	English	33 items	13 minutes
Families	All MPS families	English Spanish Portuguese Arabic French Vietnamese Pashto Urdu Russian Chinese	33 items	18 minutes
Community Partners	Key partners	English	15 items	8 minutes

DEI Definitions and Feedback

During the summer of 2021, the district developed definitions and shared understandings of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Feedback was requested on the definitions from all stakeholders, and the feedback was predominantly positive, but not all feedback was affirmative. Prior to beginning the Equity Audit journey, the Mansfield Public Schools found it important and necessary to begin to work towards a shared understanding of the meaning of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). To this end, they held a leadership work session in the summer of 2021 to build the definitions of these terms together with the goal of sharing them with the entire district and community. After the definitions were drafted by the leadership team, they were included in the Equity Audit surveys for feedback. The district felt that this work would set the stage for their journey of accountability in ensuring equitable student access and outcomes in the Mansfield Public Schools. Overall feedback themes on these definitions are discussed in the report findings for Domain 2. Below are additional reflections from stakeholders.

Stakeholder reflections on the MPS definition of “diversity”.

	Comments reflecting agreement with the definition of “diversity.”	Comments reflecting disagreement with the definition of “diversity.”
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “This explains Diversity very well; we must include everything and everyone in this definition because there are a variety of ways to define how different we all are here in 2022.” “I think it is well written.” “I think this definition is specific and is all-inclusive.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The definition is ridiculous- there is no need to name the groups if you are saying that you INCLUDE all the dimensions of difference that exist in groups-- because ultimately, you are leaving out a group that was not thought of or has yet to be defined.” “I think it is inappropriate to exclude biological sex in this definition, especially as we work with children who have different levels of hormone and development schedules, as proven by science. I also think prior lived experience should be a component of this as well, although it likely qualifies under “etc.”
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Our community as a whole needs to become more inclusive toward disparate groups, and many of these ideas of inclusivity start at home and within the realm of who we choose to surround ourselves with.” “World would be a dull place if everyone looked the same and behaved the same. We should celebrate diversity and learn from it as every color in the rainbow is important. I would add political affiliation, mental abilities, and thought process to the diversity definition as it is not only the physical traits and behavior that defines us. Our values and thinking have a very high impact.” “Diversity is the hot topic lately. It seems that the definition of diversity must include everything upon which someone can form a bias. For that reason, political affiliation and vaccination status could be added. But “Diversity” is under so much scrutiny these days; where does the definition stop?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Diversity means less White people.” “Diversity to me is based on ethnicity, national origin/religion, and that's all....the rest is just a jumble of political weapons used to divide and disempower everyone else.” “I believe we are overthinking this definition way too complicated, and we will never cover it all by continuing to separate it all out.” “This is incorrect. Diversity should be reimagined to include the diversity of shared experience regardless of appearance; otherwise, it becomes simplistic, stereotypical, and ignores the nuances of the human person.”

Stakeholder reflections on the MPS definition of “equity”.

	Comments reflecting agreement with the definition of “equity.”	Comments reflecting disagreement with the definition of “equity.”
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I agree with this definition and appreciate the point that equity recognizes different strengths and needs for different people.” “Yes, equity is what levels the playing field. Different people need different things to succeed.” “I do agree that achieving equity means that solutions will differ.” “I like how it explains that same is not equitable and that support needs to be specific to the individual.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “My thoughts on this definition are that DEI (polite wording for CRT) advocates are redefining words, and I find this disturbing. I do not agree with this definition.” “I think equity, while well-intentioned, is a dangerous game to play.” “This seems to eliminate the need for hard work and to be resilient as an individual and appears to look like something will be handed to you. This is not how the real world works. It is cutthroat and competitive.”
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I like how it honors the differences in people’s needs.” “I also think this definition is complete. I think it is important to reframe everyone’s understanding of equity. Too many times, it’s seen as “same” across the board, which we know is incomplete and reflects ignorance around the great inequity in our country these days especially.” “Equity makes sense because we’re not all on the same level, so one person might need more help than another.” “True. Equity needs to become the standard instead of the exception. Providing opportunities and equity to all sections of society is key to the growth of all. I agree with the definition.” “Agree completely! Equity is giving everyone what they need, not giving everyone the same exact thing.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Not ok with equity. Everyone deserves an equal platform. What families and children do with that educational platform directly affects their outcomes. Equity means less for some and more for others, so everyone is the same. So the more I participate in my child’s education, help them to develop a good work ethic and study habits, good grades, and stay a consistent part of their life, the less individual attention my child gets in school. Children who put in the time are negatively affected in an equity system.” “The problem with this definition is that average to above average learners are not challenged because the attention, funds, and staff are focusing on the “other” learners.” “Nope, the word “equity” as implied, is just a politically motivated way to disempower individuals from accepting their own responsibility to succeed.”

Stakeholder reflections on the MPS definition of “inclusion”.

	Comments reflecting agreement with the definition of “inclusion.”	Comments reflecting disagreement with the definition of “inclusion.”
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “This definition is sound.” “I like the wording of this, especially for people to feel supported and safe.” “This is a reasonable definition and does not require further detail.” “I feel very strongly about inclusion, and this is perfect.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I feel the definition is missing something. It seems to say, “if you create it, it will happen,” but inclusion takes work. It is beyond creating. It is promoting, supporting, maintaining, and actively participating in such environments.” “I think maybe something needs to be said about all members of the environment working

		<p>together. I feel like this definition makes it the responsibility of whoever is in charge. Still, I do think more needs to be pushed about how to handle helping all members act inclusively."</p>
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Good definition, but make sure it doesn't evolve to the point where the necessary hard lessons and conversations get put on the shelf for fear of offending someone. Kids need to learn about life = safely feeling uncomfortable is part of healthy growth." • "Inclusion is respecting ALL people in our school community and creating a respectful community for ALL irregardless of personal situation." • "Recognizing spaces and places that have historically not been inclusive is critical." • "I think it is worth adding an acknowledgment that we live in a predominantly white heteronormative environment and therefore, inclusion is a much-needed active action." • "Maybe something about barriers to participation is considered and addressed." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Inclusion is the practice of excluding and shutting down anyone who disagrees with the anti-White hate ideology and globohomo/LGBTQ crap being taught to children." • "The emphasis on EACH. Just because you are not "unique" and belong to the white, straight category, you should be treated exactly the same as if you were black or gay or "they," etc." • "Our children should grasp the nature of equality organically, not with the "screaming" banners. Educating is one thing, but rubbing this all over their face is a completely different story. Poor kids these days begin questioning themselves if there is anything wrong with them if they belong to the "protected" category." • "Inclusion is necessary but already well incorporated in the school system. But the focus should be on enriching children's lives and encouraging potential. Less time should be spent on this hocus." • "Every person is included. You are trying to create issues that are not real- because the media is creating issues. CRT has no place in schools!"