

CHELMSFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Jay Lang, Ed.D., Superintendent

Memorandum

To: Members of the School Committee
From: Jay Lang, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
Date: July 7, 2025
Re: Chelmsford Public Schools: 2024/25 Year in Review

As I reflect on my tenth year leading the Chelmsford Public Schools (CPS), I am deeply grateful for the encouragement and support I have received from students, parents, staff, and community members; I feel privileged to work with you as superintendent. I do not take the opportunity to lead this district lightly. Your support for our students is truly remarkable, and I look forward to working with you and the greater Chelmsford community as we build on past successes in the district and work to make CPS the best public school system in the state.

We have accomplished much over this past year. I am very proud of our work and I thank you for guiding and supporting me and the CPS staff as we strive to address students' academic, social, and emotional needs. I feel encouraged every day when I walk through schools, attend events, and witness firsthand the dedication to meeting students' needs displayed by our teachers, paraeducators, administrators, and support staff. Following are some highlights of our collective work this year:

FY2025 Budget Administration

School Committee members received regular reports on the district's finances throughout FY2025, including the local operating budget, grant funds, and revolving funds. After reviewing the FY2025 budget, I am pleased to report the district has continued to make great strides in stabilizing its finances. By implementing strict financial practices, it has accrued several reserve fund balances for future budget needs. At the end of FY2025, the district can:

- reserve approximately \$ 3.5 million in the special education circuit breaker revolving fund to pay for future unanticipated/unfunded special education student tuition and/or transportation costs (by contrast, when I arrived ten years ago in the fall of 2015, the school department had to request a supplemental appropriation of \$ 500,000 from the town to cover unanticipated special education tuition costs as no reserve fund balance was available).

- reserve \$ 822,000 in a new special education reserve fund in accordance with MGL Ch. 40 § 13E to offset unanticipated/unfunded special education student tuition and/or transportation costs in future fiscal years.
- carry over approximately \$ 3.8 million in food service/school nutrition funds. This is a significant achievement, given that many school districts find themselves operating their food service programs at a deficit. A portion of these funds has been allocated to a FY2025 capital improvement project.
- set aside approximately \$ 3.2 million in school choice funds as a reserve for future spending by the School Committee on educational programs and services to augment current program offerings in the schools, or a contingency in the event of an unanticipated budget shortfall. School choice funds are earmarked annually to support the 1:1 student Chromebook initiative.

FY2026 Budget Presentation and Review

In February, the administration presented the FY2026 general fund operating budget to the School Committee, including net school spending compliance and comparable community analysis (demographic and financial). We highlighted the assumptions that underlie the FY2026 budget, including normal step and lane increases, and funding to support the fourth and final phase implementation of the in-district Language Based Program at the middle school level. The School Committee held public input sessions and reviewed district-level budget detail and a staff salary book that cross-walked salaries to the main budget document. The budget presented and reviewed was in-line with Town Manager Cohen's recommended budget increase of \$ 1.77 million, \$ 73.88 million to \$ 75.65 million, to support the Chelmsford Public Schools.

At the April 28, 2025 town meeting, representatives once again asked thoughtful questions, received straightforward answers, and approved (near unanimously: 135 - 2) the FY2026 funding request of \$75.65 million to support CPS.

Ratification of the Chelmsford Federation of Teachers – Teachers and Nurses

On June 27, 2025, the School Committee ratified a three-year contract with the Chelmsford Federation of Teachers – Teachers and Nurses bargaining unit covering the period from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2028.

Ratification of the Chelmsford Federation of Teachers – Professional Support Personnel Contract

On June 27, 2025, the School Committee ratified a three-year contract with the Chelmsford Federation of Teachers – Professional Support Personnel bargaining unit covering the period from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2028.

Ratification of the Chelmsford School Administrators' Association Contract

On June 27, 2025, the School Committee ratified a three-year contract with the Chelmsford School Administrators' Association bargaining unit covering the period from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2028.

Ratification of the Chelmsford Schools' Food Service Association Contract

On June 27, 2025, the School Committee ratified a three-year contract with the Chelmsford Schools Food Service Association bargaining unit covering the period from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2028.

MSBA Eligibility Period Deliverables: Parker Middle School

On December 13, 2023, we received fantastic news that the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Board of Directors voted to invite the Town of Chelmsford into the Eligibility Period for the Parker Middle School Statement of Interest (SOI) submitted in April, 2023. This was our sixth application (4 for CHS and 2 for Parker) to the MSBA for funding consideration of a potential new school building project in town. The Eligibility Period officially commenced on April 1, 2024 with the completion of eight (8) required deliverables by December 27, 2024. At the April 29, 2024 town meeting, representatives voted to approve a warrant article authorizing the expenditure of \$ 1.8 million to fund the Feasibility Study (near unanimously with 121 in favor, 3 opposed, and 1 abstention).

MSBA Invitation to Feasibility Study: Parker Middle School

After successfully submitting the eight (8) required deliverables to the MSBA by the December 27, 2024 deadline, the MSBA Board of Directors voted on December 13, 2024 to invite the Town to conduct a Feasibility Study of the Parker Middle School for a potential new school building project. This is a major step to obtain MSBA funding to support a new school building project in Town. During the Feasibility Study the Town will engage the services of an Owners Project Manager (OPM) and Designer to work with us to explore three potential building options for Parker Middle School. The first option is a 1:1 replacement of Parker Middle School serving two grade levels (5 and 6 – approximately 800 students), the second option is a new school serving all middle school grade levels (5 – 8) in one building (approximately 1,600 students), and the third option is a new school with a grade level reconfiguration serving three grade levels (4 – 6 – approximately 1,200 students). LeftField was selected and approved to serve as the OPM for the project after a successful procurement process during the spring of 2025. The procurement process to obtain the services of a designer is underway and selection is anticipated in early September, 2025.

School Safety and Security Review

In November, 2022, the district contracted with the Edward Davis Company to conduct a security site assessment and policy review of all eight (8) CPS schools. The contract included a comprehensive physical security site assessment/threat vulnerability risk assessment of all eight (8) CPS school facilities. The scope included fact gathering and a

technical walk through resulting in a report of identified threats relative to each schools' safety and prioritized recommendations for enhanced day-to-day security. School administration and our district security subcommittee reviewed the report and have incorporated immediate, short- and long-term recommendations to CPS facilities and procedures. In April, 2025, representatives of the Edward Davis Group returned to the district to observe and make recommendations on the secure school entrance capital project and visitor management procedures/process to be implemented throughout the district. Further, in May, representatives were on-site to observe and provide feedback on ALICE options-based safety drills conducted at each school location. Review and enhancement of school safety procedures and protocols remains a focal point of our work.

Districtwide Strategic Planning

In November of 2021, the district contracted with District Management Group (DMGroup) to develop a multi-year strategic plan for the Chelmsford Public Schools. DMGroup worked with district administrators and a steering committee to assess our current performance and needs, and to clearly articulate priority areas to be the focus of our improvement efforts in the coming years to continue to advance education in Chelmsford. DMGroup hosted staff and community sessions to gather input for the plan and presented updates to the steering committee and school committee throughout the process. In June of 2022, a draft strategic plan was presented and final feedback was sought on the identified priority areas. In July of 2022, the final strategic plan that will guide our work in the Chelmsford Public Schools over the next 5-years: 2022/23 – 2026/27 was approved by the school committee. A steering committee met regularly over the 2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25 school years to monitor the implementation of Years 1, 2, and 3 of the strategic plan priority areas. The School Committee received updates throughout the school year from the subcommittees focused on each of the five priority areas (academic achievement, equity, social emotional learning, human capital, and operations and facilities) as well as mid-year and end-of-year strategic plan updates from DMGroup.

Special Education Opportunities Review: Paraeducator Working Group

In September of 2022, the district contracted with District Management Group (DMGroup) to develop an understanding of current practice related to special education and intervention in the district, explore alignment of current practice with best practice research in order to raise achievement of students with disabilities, and identify opportunities to align staff practices with best practices and effectively manage staffing in order to create sustained change in schools and classrooms and improve the work life of teachers. In May of 2023, the school committee received a report and recommendations detailing the project methodology, data analysis, commendations, and high leverage support areas for CPS to consider implementing to improve support for students with disabilities. Among the top high leverage opportunity areas for examination was the role paraeducators play in supporting the districts' Equity priority

work around closing the achievement gap between students with and without disabilities in the district.

In the 2023/24 school year, a working group convened to review the roles and responsibilities of paraeducators throughout the district to 1) understand the gaps in current and ideal responsibilities of paraeducators in the district, 2) outline clear, consistent responsibilities of paraeducators to support students and district priorities, 3) develop a communication and PD plan so all staff understand the role of paraeducators, and 4) develop a progress monitoring plan to ensure consistency of the paraeducators role across the district to ensure consistency. The working group convened periodically throughout the 2024/25 school year to progress monitor the implementation of the refined roles and responsibilities of paraeducators in the district. The School Committee received mid-year and end-of-year strategic plan updates from DMGroup, including updates on the work of the Equity priority area and refined role of the paraeducator.

Over this past year, we have accomplished much as we worked together. In addition to the aforementioned actions of the past year, we continued to administer and manage the day-to-day operations of the school district, approved capital plans for FY2026, expanded programming, such as the Dual Enrollment and Innovation Pathways Programs at Chelmsford High School, and continued an emphasis on equitable and inclusive practices in our school system.

In addition to the developments already listed, we have taken steps to continue to build confidence in the school administration and school system. I have worked closely with Town Manager Cohen and the members of his financial team to provide accurate and timely information on our budget to Chelmsford's boards. We will close the books on FY2025 with a positive fund balance and we will set aside remaining school choice funds as a reserve for School Committee use. Much work lies ahead, but I strongly feel we are continuing to move in the right direction. I am excited about our staffs' accomplishments in the district this past year and look forward to a successful 2025/26 school year.