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# *A Way Forward:*

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## *Latino Youth and Families in Worcester*

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*A Report From The Worcester Mayoral Commission  
on Latino Education and Advancement*

*January 21, 2021*

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on Latino Education and Advancement*



WORCESTER STATE UNIVERSITY  
LATINO EDUCATION INSTITUTE





# *Executive Summary*



# A WAY FORWARD: LATINO YOUTH AND FAMILIES IN WORCESTER

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Latinos constitute approximately 21% of Worcester’s population. Currently, 43.1% of students enrolled in Worcester Public Schools are Latinx, more than double when compared to those enrolled in all of Massachusetts public schools. The Latino population growth trend it is expected to continue for the foreseeable future with 14% net growth by 2035. Latinos bring rich cultural wealth and have contributed to Worcester’s vibrant cultural fabric. However, Latinx also have the worst socio-economic indicators in Worcester and the Commonwealth in poverty, income, educational attainment, incarceration, and unemployment. There is an undeniable equity gap in this segment of our population. Thus, as a community, we have to acknowledge that for Worcester to continue to thrive, the Latino community needs to succeed.

Responding to Worcester community’s concerns about opportunities for Latino families and equity in education, Mayor Joseph Petty appointed Luis G. Pedraja and Mary Jo Marion to lead a multisector effort resulting in this report that includes actionable recommendations to achieve equity in Latinx education. Pedraja and Marion built a commission that integrated representatives from public schools, higher education, community-based organizations, and community leaders.

While the Commission was originally charged to review and analyze education data, identify barriers, challenges, and opportunities for Latinx families, it was obvious that other factors beyond education affected the success of the community. Therefore, this report addresses issues related to housing, health, transportation, and employment that directly impact Latinx education attainment.

This report – from findings to recommendations - is the outcome of 18 months of consistent work, four at-large community listening sessions and 11 commission meetings in which data was critically reviewed and analyzed, and existing laws, policies, and practices were assessed emphasizing their impact on Latinx education achievement. The Commission presented a draft report to the community in late fall 2019. The final report was scheduled for final release in Spring 2020, but the onset of the pandemic prevented it. Given the impact of the CoVid-19 pandemic on the Latinx population in Worcester, we decided to revise the timeline and provide some preliminary information on how the pandemic affected our community in this executive summary and in the appendix.



The voice of the community together with outcomes data led the Commission to identify the following four large improvement areas and to itemize specific recommendations for each area.

- Rebuilding trust between the Latinx community and Worcester Public Schools
- Call for racial/ethnic and gender equity
- Accountability to families and students
- Quality of life: health, housing, and wealth

The Commission wants to stress the following: First, the intent of the report was not to find fault, but to examine the facts and assess data, identify the problems, recommend actionable and measurable solutions to the problems, and define specific follow-up steps including timelines and accountability measures. Second, the report calls for more than just marginal changes in policy or practice. The time for significant shifts that create a culture of broad ownership over racial equity is now.

The Covid-19 Pandemic, the ensuing economic crisis, and the killing of George Floyd further highlighted the prevalence of systemic racism and disparity in equity that exists in our nation. The disproportionate impact of CoVid-19 on Latinx and Black families is well documented by research data. In Worcester alone, over 30% of the CoVid-19 cases are Latinx although they make up constitute are only 21% of the population. According to Worcester Department of Public Health, Latinos ages 0 to 19 have tested positive for the virus at rates up to seven times higher than white children and double to triple the rate for Black children. Latinx are more likely to live in multi-generational homes, serve as frontline essential workers, and have limited access to healthcare that increases their risk of exposure to the virus. Unemployment, evictions, homelessness, and food insecurity, already a problem for the Latinx population, are on the rise due to the pandemic. In addition, access to computers and internet connectivity limit their ability to work from home or access education.

We commend the WPS for the work done in providing computers, hotspots, and lunches to the students, although the city's continued challenges with broadband providers and access continues to be a struggle. We also commend WPS for working with the Latino Empowerment Organizing Network (LEON) and the Latino Education Institute in developing town hall information sessions in Spanish. In spite of these efforts, research indicates that K-12 students continue to face formidable obstacles.

Prior to the pandemic, nearly 22% of Worcester households had no internet service at home; 28% didn't have a computer<sup>1</sup>. Among Latinos 59% did not have access to broadband.<sup>2</sup> The digital divide in Worcester coupled with a blanket policy to only offer remote learning modalities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted the condition of education for Latinos. English language learners and special

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<sup>1</sup> <https://massinc.org/research/digital-divide/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.wrrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Broadening-Broadband-FINAL.pdf>



education students needing in-person interventions have been especially harmed by the COVID educational landscape.

The Commission is concerned that the COVID learning slide will be steep once the pandemic lifts. Researchers at the Rennie Institute believe students of color and low-income students will be the most impacted due to the digital divide, the predominance of parents working as essential workers unable to support students' remote education, and growing unemployment and food insecurity.<sup>3</sup> We urge parents, community organizations, policy makers and schools to provide soft landings for students that are falling behind in addition to opportunities to accelerate learning. COVID has further reduced learning opportunities and too many students have not received grade-appropriate instruction as school systems suddenly shifted modalities. We know that educational equity demands grade-appropriate instruction and that remedial education cycles have a negative effect on educational achievement. We must work together as a united community to combat learning loss.

Research also indicates that Latinx access to higher education has been significantly affected by the pandemic. Recent data released by the Census Bureau indicates that over 40% of households with someone planning to enroll in a community college fall 2021 decided not to enroll, while 20% of those planning to enroll in a four-year institution gave up on their plans. Latinx, Black, and low-income students were disproportionately more likely to not pursue their education and reported greater challenges related to CoVid-19 such as being sick, taking care of ill family members, loss of employment, and finances as a cause for their decision.<sup>4</sup> Nationally, applications for financial aid are significantly down for underrepresented minorities.

Due to the pandemic, the Commission has revised the timeline for the recommended action steps and expected outcomes. The Commission also recommends that in fall 2020 we convene a task group to evaluate the aftermath of the pandemic on the Latinx community in Worcester and review the progress on implementing the Commission's recommendations.

The Commission hopes that this report is seen as a starting point of a larger and holistic strategic plan resulting in eliminating inequity among Latino and other minoritized populations in Worcester so the full community can thrive. Finally, the Commission wants to thank all participants, the community and Major Petty for their trust and support.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.renniecenter.org/research/back-school-blueprint/accessing-grade-level-content>

<sup>4</sup> Belfield, Clive and Thomas Brock. 2020. Behind the Enrollment Numbers: How COVID Has Changed Students' Plans for Community College. Community Colleges Research Center. Teachers College. Columbia University. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/easyblog/covid-enrollment-community-college-plans.html>.



# *The Report*

## INTRODUCTION, HISTORICAL CONTEXT, AND PROCESS

The Latinx community is one of the fastest growing community in the United States, growing by almost 15 percent in the last decade. The Pew Research Center reports that “the U.S. Hispanic population, up reached a record 59.9 million in 2018, up 1.2 million over the previous year and up from 47.8 million in 2008”.<sup>5</sup> From 2000-2009 Massachusetts was one of six states in which the Latinx population accounted for all of the state’s population growth -a trend that continued into this decade. According to the Gastón Institute at UMass Boston, the Latinx population in Massachusetts increased by 28 percent from 2010-17, constituting 60 percent of all the population growth in the Commonwealth.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the report states that by 2035 “Latinos in Massachusetts will number more than 1.15 million and represent more than 15 percent of the state population.”<sup>7</sup>

In Worcester the Latinx community grew in recent years to approximately 21 percent of the city’s population. These trends are projected to continue for the foreseeable future, with a 14 percent net growth by 2035. The Latinx population growth is tangible throughout the community and in the public school system. The Massachusetts Department of Education data shows that 42.9 percent of students enrolled in Worcester school district are Hispanic, more than double when compared to the Hispanics enrolled in all of Massachusetts public schools.<sup>8</sup> However, as recently as last year, Massachusetts was named the worst state for Latinx based on a number of socio-economic indicators: poverty, income, educational attainment, incarceration, and unemployment.<sup>9</sup> Given the equity gap in this increasing segment of our population, the success of Worcester’s Latinx community is essential to ensure that our growing community continues to thrive.

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<sup>5</sup> Flores, Antonio, Mark Lugo Lopez, and Jens Manuel Krogstad. 2019. U.S. Hispanic Population Reached New High in 2018, but Growth Has Slowed. Pew Research Center. July 8<sup>th</sup>. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/07/08/u-s-hispanic-population-reached-new-high-in-2018-but-growth-has-slowed/>

<sup>6</sup> Granberry, Phillip and Mattos, Trevor, "Massachusetts Latino Population: 2010-2035" (2019). GASTÓN INSTITUTE PUBLICATIONS. 241. [https://scholarworks.umb.edu/gaston\\_pubs/241](https://scholarworks.umb.edu/gaston_pubs/241)

<sup>7</sup> Roman, Elizabeth. 2019. Report Predicts 1.15 Million Latinos in Massachusetts by 2035. MassLive. March 6<sup>th</sup>. <https://www.masslive.com/news/2019/03/report-predicts-115-million-latinos-in-massachusetts-by-2035.html>

<sup>8</sup> See Massachusetts Schools and Districts Profiles. The percentage of Hispanics enrolled in Massachusetts public schools is 20.8. <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=03480000&orgtypecode=5&>

<sup>9</sup> Stebbins, Samuel and Evan Comen. 2018. Economic Inequality: The Worst States for Hispanics and Latinos. USA Today. January 19<sup>th</sup>. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/economy/2018/01/19/economic-inequality-worst-states-hispanics-and-latinos/1035606001/>

## COMMISSION CHARGE

In May 2018 Mayor Joseph Petty called for a commission to address the community's concerns about opportunities for Latino families in Worcester and equity in education.<sup>10</sup> He appointed Dr. Luis G. Pedraja, Quinsigamond Community College President and Mary Jo Marion, Assistant Vice President for Urban Affairs and the Latino Education Institute at Worcester State University to chair The **Commission on Latino Advancement and Education**. The Commission, as formed by the chairs, had representation from the public schools, higher education, community-based organizations, and community leaders.

### Commission Members

- John Monfredo. |.Worcester Public Schools
- Olga Daisy Navedo-Rivera. |.Worcester Public Schools
- Leopoldo Negrón Cruz. |.Edward M. Kennedy Health Center
- Luis Pedraja. |. Quinsigamond Community College
- Margarita Perez. |.Worcester State University
- Daniel Racicot. |.City of Worcester
- Hilda Ramirez. |.Worcester State University
- Elliot Rivera. |.Youth on Board (Providence, RI)
- Sarai Rivera. |.City of Worcester
- Ruth Rodriguez. |.Save Our Schools
- Gladys Rodriguez-Parker. |.Congressman McGovern's office
- Cythia Stone. |.College of the Holy Cross
- Jeffrey Turgeon. |.MassHire Central Region
- Alex . |.St. John's High School
- Eric Batista. |.City of Worcester
- Maureen Biniend. |.Worcester Public Schools
- Ramon Borges-Mendez. |.Clark University
- Matilde Castiel. |. City of Worcester
- Dante Comparetto. |.Worcester Public Schools
- Thomas Conroy. |.Worcester State University
- Alex Corrales. |.Worcester Housing Authority
- Tracy Novick. |.MA Association of Schools Committee
- Maritza Cruz. |.YWCA Central Mass
- Jennifer Davis Carey. |.Worcester Education Collaborative
- Juan Gomez. |.CENTRO
- Deborah Gonzalez. |.Quinsigamond Community College
- Monica Lowell Escobar. |.UMass Memorial Medical Center

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<sup>10</sup> O'Connell, Scott. 2019. New Commission to Look at Issues Affecting Worcester's Latino Students. Telegram. January 19<sup>th</sup>. <https://www.telegram.com/news/20190117/new-commission-to-look-at-issues-affecting-worcesters-latino-students>

- Mary Jo Marion. | .Worcester State University
- Carmen Melendez. | .Worcester Public Schools
- Carmen Rosado. | . Latino Education Institute

The Commission was originally charged to meet regularly over the course of a year to review and analyze data, identify barriers, challenges, and opportunities for Latinx families, culminating in a set of recommendations for the Mayor, which he would share with the Worcester School Committee and other elected officials. While acknowledging that education is critical to the success of the Latinx community in Worcester, the Commission recognized that there are factors beyond education that affect the success of the community. As a result, the Commission expanded its scope to identify issues related to housing, health, transportation, and employment that affect the Latinx community and have a direct impact on education attainment. Given its original charge, education constitutes the primary scope of the Commission’s analysis and recommendations, with either a limited set of recommendations on the other areas and noting those that might require further review.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In understanding the context of our work, it is important that Worcester’s community stakeholders acknowledge the historical trajectory that informs some of the issues addressed by the Commission. Many of the barriers encountered by the United States Latinx community today are the product of decades and centuries of marginalization and discriminatory socio-economic practices that led to systemic structural inequalities that disproportionately affect these communities. These include, but are not limited to, public policies such as segregation<sup>11</sup>, economic practices such as “redlining”<sup>12</sup>, limited access to affordable housing<sup>13</sup>, disparate treatment in employment<sup>14</sup> and limited access to education<sup>15</sup>, among many other factors.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Lockhart, P.R. 2019. 65 Years after Brown v. Board of Education School Segregation in Getting Worse. Vox. May 10. <https://www.vox.com/identities/2019/5/10/18566052/school-segregation-brown-board-education-report>

<sup>12</sup> Jan, Tracy. 2018. Redlining Was Banned 50 Years Ago. It’s Still Hurting Minorities Today. The Washington Post. March 28. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2018/03/28/redlining-was-banned-50-years-ago-its-still-hurting-minorities-today/>

<sup>13</sup> Fulwood III, Sam. 2016. The United States’ History of Segregated Housing Continues to Limit Affordable Housing. Center for American Progress. December 15<sup>th</sup>. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2016/12/15/294374/the-united-states-history-of-segregated-housing-continues-to-limit-affordable-housing/>

<sup>14</sup> Nunn, Ryan, Jana Parsons, and Jay Shambaugh. 2019. Race and Underemployment in the US Labor Market. Brookings. August 1<sup>st</sup>. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2019/08/01/race-and-underemployment-in-the-u-s-labor-market/>

<sup>15</sup> Brownstain, Ronald. 2016. The Challenges of Education Inequality. The Atlantic. May 19. <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/05/education-inequality-takes-center-stage/483405/>

<sup>16</sup> See for instance, Rahman, K. Sabeel, Constructing and Contesting Structural Inequality (April 16, 2018). Critical Analysis of Law 5.1 (2018). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3163825> ,

These inequalities continue to affect Latinx and other marginalized communities today as noted in a recent article “The Unequal Race for Good Jobs: How Whites Made Outsized Gains in Education and Good Jobs Compared to Blacks and Latinos” published by the independent Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.<sup>17</sup> In Massachusetts we find similar inequalities, including in higher education where the gap in educational attainment between white females and Latinx male is over 40%. That is, while about 65 percent of white women in Massachusetts hold a college degree, only 22 percent of Latino males do.<sup>18</sup> Also on the topic of inequity in higher education in Massachusetts, the *Education Reform Now* reports that “four-year graduation gap between White and Black students is the third best in the nation, its White-Latino graduation gap is 37th worst out of all 50 states and the District of Columbia.”<sup>19</sup>

In addition to the structural barriers created and perpetuated by governmental policies, the Commission does not want to ignore the perseverance of cultural stereotypes, labeling, and criminalization of ethnic, racial, and other minoritized groups in our society. Those unaddressed factors continue to affect the treatment of these groups in education, employment, and policing, particularly when internalized social constructs or unacknowledged unconscious biases lead us to perceive minoritized groups as underperformers or threats to the United States’ economy, security, and social fiber.<sup>20</sup>

Massachusetts and Worcester have wrestled with issues affecting the Latinx education attainment for the past fifty years. In 1971, the Massachusetts State House passed the Transitional Bilingual Education Bill, the first law in the nation to mandate, as opposed to simply permit, that students who were not fluent in English be provided with some instruction and pedagogical materials in their primary language. In 1979 Federal Judge Robert E. Keeton issued a preliminary injunction requiring the Worcester Public Schools to provide “a full-time program of instruction” in their native language to all students not proficient in English whose first language was Spanish. The case was ended with a settlement or consent decree in 1983. In 2002, in the wake of Proposition 227 in California, Massachusetts voters passed a similar ballot initiative, Question 2, which mandated that public school children be taught all subjects in English. However,

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and “Redlining was banned 50 years ago. It’s still hurting minorities today,” *Washington Post*, March 28, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. 2019. The Unequal Race for Good Jobs: How Whites Made Outsized Gains in Education and Good Jobs Compared to Blacks and Latinos. <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/raceandgoodjobs/>

<sup>18</sup> Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Data Center. January 2019. <https://www.mass.edu/datacenter/equityspotlight-latinomales.asp>

<sup>19</sup> Dannenberg, Michael and Konrad Mugglestone. No Commencement in the Commonwealth: How Massachusetts Higher Education System Undermines Mobility for Latinos and Others and What We Can Do About It. *Education Reform Now*. <https://edreformnow.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/ERN-No-Commencement-in-the-Commonwealth-WEB.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> These stereotypes date back to the creation of the “black legends” by the British during their war with Spain, used as anti-Spanish propaganda. In addition, the 19<sup>th</sup> century doctrine of manifest destiny in the U.S., not only served to justify expansionism and domination, but also created stereotypes of Latinx as lazy, inferior, and untrustworthy that persist to this day.

Worcester, because of the 1979 federal consent decree, maintained its bilingual education programs, albeit with a focus more on developing a positive school climate for multiple languages and heritages than on developing linguistic proficiency in both Spanish and English.

Education reform has been a central concern for the Worcester Latinx community for many years. For instance, in 1996, a Latino Summit on Violence ("La Cumbre") held at Doherty High School with 300 or so people in attendance coalesced around prioritizing educational reform. In 2010, in the face of continuing high Latino drop-out rates, a persistent achievement gap, and low levels of academic engagement, Mayor Joseph C. O'Brien formed a Commission for Latino Educational Excellence.

From 2011 to 2017 there was improvement in graduation rates, but a drop in college enrollment and in the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) scores for Latinx. The decline of MCAS scores impacted Latinx access to postsecondary education resurfacing the issues of Latinx education attainment in the school district.

In recent years, Worcester's Latinx community also expressed concerns regarding statistics indicating that Latinx students are twice as likely to be disciplined than white students, as well as showing much higher numbers of in and out of school suspensions, delinquency, and withdrawals.<sup>21</sup> This seems to be a prevalent problem in the commonwealth and in the country.<sup>22</sup> While students subjected to disciplinary actions in Massachusetts public schools has decreased, Black and Latinx student continue to be more likely to be disciplined and the disciplinary action tends to be harsher when compared to white students.<sup>23</sup> Public school systems across the country are dealing with the same disproportionality in discipline measures when accounting for race.

The Commission takes the disproportion in disciplinary measures in Worcester very seriously because racial disparities in school discipline have direct impact on education attainment as data shows that students who are suspended often are more likely to drop-out of school and have more run-ins with the juvenile justice system.<sup>24</sup> In addition,

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<sup>21</sup> Balingit, Moriah. 2018. Racial Disparities in School Discipline Are Growing, Federal Data Show. The Washington Post. April 24. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/racial-disparities-in-school-discipline-are-growing-federal-data-shows/2018/04/24/67b5d2b8-47e4-11e8-827e-190efaf1f1ee\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/racial-disparities-in-school-discipline-are-growing-federal-data-shows/2018/04/24/67b5d2b8-47e4-11e8-827e-190efaf1f1ee_story.html)

<sup>22</sup> Data shows that there are racial disparities in how schoolchildren are punished for disciplinary issues across the United States. The "zero tolerance" policies adopted by school districts across the country have resulted in minority students facing disproportional number of disciplinary actions. For example, Black and Latinx students are consistently punished more severely than white students for the same infractions. See United States Department of Education. 2014. Expansive Survey of America's Public Schools Reveals Troubling Racial Disparities. March 21. <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/expansive-survey-americas-public-schools-reveals-troubling-racial-disparities>

<sup>23</sup> McNerney, Kathleen. 2018. Fewer Massachusetts Students Suspended, But Disparities Persist. WBUR. September 28. <https://www.wbur.org/edify/2018/09/28/school-discipline-rates-decline>

<sup>24</sup> Weir, Kirsten. 2016. Inequality at School: What's Behind the Racial Disparity in Our Education System? American Psychological Association. November. Vol 47, No. 10. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2016/11/cover-inequality-school>

disciplinary problems in school directly and negatively affect the student's experience with the education system, the opportunities to learn (as they stop attending classes), and life outcomes (such as employment and family relations). The burden of disciplinary measures and their consequences on education attainment and future success, disproportionately falls on students of color.<sup>25</sup>

It is important to note that while there have been some advances and serious efforts to improve education attainment for Latinx students, the historical trajectory indicates that the concerns expressed and barriers to advancement experienced by Worcester's Latinx community continue to persist or reoccur over multiple decades, becoming more evident as the Latinx community continues to grow.<sup>26</sup>

## ACTION STEPS

In response to the concerns raised by parents, community leaders and organizations, Worcester's Mayor, School Committee and Superintendent agreed to 14 action steps that the schools needed implement. These actions steps included some preliminary recommendations of the Commission. On May 9, 2019 the Worcester School Committee unanimously approved the following action items:

1. School Department to create clear and transparent process to provide the necessary, student-sensitive data needed to do a thorough review of the suspension rates in our Worcester Public Schools. This should include the last 7 years of data.

Timeline: 90 days

2. Worcester State University to re-engage with our school department regarding the 2014 report, "Suspension in Worcester: A Continuing Conversation".

Timeline: 45 days

3. Incorporate comprehensive training practices focused on understanding cultural differences, unconscious bias, understanding racial disparities, and trauma informed care for all staff. Included in this training is MGL c222. For all staff including School Committee.

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<sup>25</sup> Okonofua, Jason A. Gregory M. Walton, Jennifer L. Eberhardt. 2016. A Vicious Cycle: A Social-Psychological Account of Extreme Racial Disparities in School Discipline. Perspectives on Psychological Sciences. SAGE Journals.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1745691616635592>

<sup>26</sup> A recent report by the state to the School Committee noted the persistence of the racial gap:  
<https://www.telegram.com/news/20191017/state-report-student-discipline-down-in-worcester-in-2019-but-racial-gaps-persist>



Timeline: Plan for implementations by June to be reviewed by School Committee. Implementation underway by Fall 2019 for all administrators, Principals and School Committee.

4. Review of the state's school discipline statute, MGLc222, to ensure the city is in complete compliance with the law and make any necessary changes to our policies and procedures.

Timeline: Request that school contact and ask DESE review by September 2019.

5. Continue to maintain an English Language Learner Parent Advisory Council that includes Community Based Organizations and Community Partners in compliance with law, which will work with both the Director of English Language Learners and the Chief Diversity Officer.

Timeline: By January 2020

6. Review the practice of out of school suspension for students in K-2 grade and work with community partners and internal staff to create an in-school program to provide counselling and assessment services for these students, contingent on proper funding and in-kind services.

Timeline: By January 2020

7. Create an Affirmative Action Advisory Committee that would work with the Human Resource Department and the Chief Diversity Officer. Provide a semiannual report to the School Committee, with the Human Resources Department and the Chief Diversity Officer, as to progress.

Timeline: By January 2020

8. Create a Superintendents Latino Advisory Committee

Timeline: By January of 2020

9. Quarterly/biannual reports on the progress of the Strategic Plan

10. Review and maintain the existing suspension hearing and appeal practices so that the same Worcester Public Schools (WPS) person is not allowed to do both hearings and appeals.

Timeline: Implement immediately

11. Hiring a Chief Diversity Officer who shall report to the Superintendent and who shall work collaboratively with the Department of Human Resources of the Worcester Public Schools

Timeline: goal of hire within six months

12. Review and assist a comprehensive plan with college presidents to do focused recruitment and retention plans to hire diverse teachers and support staff.

Timeline: Report from College Presidents Fall 2019

13. Provide a semi-annual report on the work of the English Language Learner Department and programs to the School Committee on compliance with best practices and Federal DOE guidelines

Timeline: Fall 2019

14. Work with the School Committee to consider and implement recommendations of the Mayors Commission where appropriate. Work with the Commission to benchmark projects.

Timeline: Fall 2019

The Commission requested an update on progress in implementing the action items above. An update from the Superintendent of Schools is provided in the addendum.

## OVERVIEW OF THE COMMISSION'S WORK

The Commission held its first meeting on May 11, 2018 at City Hall. At that meeting, the Commission reviewed the history leading to the formation of the Commission and the available and relevant data regarding Worcester Public Schools education outcomes and disciplinary measures. At the time, the Commission set a series of ground rules, defined the scope of its work, and set guidelines for the task ahead. First, the primary ground rule was that the Commission's intent would not be to find fault, but to examine the facts, identify the problems, recommend actionable and measurable solutions to the problems, and define specific follow-up steps including timelines and accountability measures. The Commission members also agreed to treat each other with respect and offer opportunities for everyone, including members of the community, to be heard.

Second, the scope of work will primarily focus on education, but as noted above, we expanded our work to include some of the other barriers encountered by the Latinx community, such as access to affordable housing, employment, resources and health. We also noted some of the opportunities, assets and contributions made by Latinx to the community. From the start, the Commission focused its analysis on three areas: data, policy, and community input.

The review of the data drew from various sources, primarily using publicly available data. In analyzing the data, the Commission looked at both aggregated and disaggregated data, trends, benchmarks, comparative analysis, and longitudinal data. We also took into consideration differences in reporting requirements, various ways in which the data could be interpreted, and the lived experience of individuals referenced

in the data sets. Further, we noted the need for greater transparency in the reporting of data and the need to set common data sets, benchmarks, and expected outcomes to track in the future regardless of changes in state and local reporting guidelines.<sup>27</sup>

In terms of policy, the Commission reviewed existing laws, policies, and practices to determine whether they protected or hindered the advancement of the Latinx community. We also examined whether policies were being followed or equitably applied.

Finally, the Commission sought public input through open community meetings on specific topics and on the general lived experience of the community. Our intent was to take into consideration multiple points of view, to provide a voice to the community, and to ensure a transparent process that ensured input from the community. We also sought to validate the lived experiences of the community, to address misconceptions or disconnect, and to note areas where communication needs to improve.

Since its formation in May 2018, the Commission held eleven meetings (opened to the community) and four public meetings:

**MAYORAL COMMISSION MEETINGS:**

**2018** – 5/11, 6/1, 8/6, 8/28, 9/25, 10/30, 11/27

**2019** – 2/7, 3/26, 4/30, 5/28,

**COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS:**

**2019** – 1/22, 5/16, 6/13, 8/13

**REPORT OUT:**

10/28/19

Through its various meetings, the Commission focused its review on the following areas:

- General data v. disaggregated (challenges of data) – obtaining changes in reporting
- School suspensions (including presentations by students affected by school discipline)
- Success rates – graduation and higher education
- Diversity of teachers/students
- Early childhood
- Health and housing
- Economic Barriers

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<sup>27</sup> At a meeting on October 10, 2019, legislators recognized the ongoing need for greater transparency and access to data: <https://www.telegram.com/news/20191010/lawmakers-agree-to-press-worcester-schools-for-discipline-data>



**CURRENT CLIMATE AND MOVING FORWARD:** Currently, the national discourse on race relations is fragmented in the United States. The rise of nationalism, anti-immigrant rhetoric, hate-speech, and violence against ethnic and racial minorities has created a hostile climate that presents significant challenges for the advancement of Latinx and other people of color as well as immigrants. During the course of the Commission’s work, we noted the emergence of divisions in our community that could undermine our progress and prevent us from moving forward.<sup>28</sup> In forging our path forward, it is important that as a community we recognize the following.

- First, we cannot ignore the legacy of unjust practices and biases that created and supported systemic structural inequalities that still affect our communities. We are the product of history thus avoiding difficult conversations about implicit and explicit biases will only perpetuate discriminatory behaviors delaying holistic community healing and socio-economic and education equity.
- Second, these structural biases are not the result of the actions of a single person nor can they be resolved through the action of a few. To move forward, we need to focus on our shared challenges and work together as a community on achieving a solution that will ensure the success of our community as a whole.

The following findings and recommendations are respectfully presented to the community not as the end result of our work, but as the beginning of our collective efforts to ensure the success of Worcester’s Latinx community.

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<sup>28</sup> Multiple articles and comments in local media highlighter the divide. See for example: <https://www.telegram.com/news/20190401/clive-mcfarlane-local-coalition-says-its-time-for-worcester-school-superintendent-to-go> and <https://www.telegram.com/news/20190404/upset-by-facebook-post-worcester-school-board-member-john-monfredo-quits-latino-commission>

## FINDINGS

Over the past thirteen months, the Commission gathered and analyzed information to illuminate the status of Latinx youth and families in Worcester with a focus on education. Our aim is to examine the conditions that affect the ability of Latinx youth and families to thrive as they become a growing economic and cultural force in Worcester.

We are grateful for the assistance provided by Worcester State University's City Lab, a unit of the Urban Studies Department in this endeavor. The Commission also looked closely at data provided by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) both on their public portal as well as data shared as part of DESE's special presentation to the Worcester School Committee on October 17, 2019. In addition, over a dozen local experts came forward with important information and perspectives. Direct testimony from youth and families provided context and a sense of urgency to deliberations.

In general, we explored three categories of information: Academic Indicators, School Culture and Climate, and Access to Key Resources.

### ACADEMIC INDICATORS

For context, Worcester is the second largest school district in Massachusetts serving more than 25,000 students across 44 schools. Some 42.9% of students are Latinx, significantly higher than the state average of 20%. More than half of Worcester students are economically disadvantaged compared to 31% of all students in Massachusetts. English learners comprise 32% of all students in Worcester compare to only 10% for Commonwealth.

The Commission recognizes excellence in Worcester Public School System, including:

- 1) Universal SAT taking practices to encourage and facilitate advance study. Almost all students are required to take the SAT and there are provisions that cover fees;
- 2) Schools that outperform similar schools in other urban areas including University Park Campus School, Tatnuck Magnet, and the Goddard Scholars Program;
- 3) An expanding cadre of dual language programs across multiple schools, allowing students to master two languages before graduating;
- 4) Opening doors to post-secondary education through a growing early college program. Each year for the past three years over 300 high school students earn college and high school credit at Quinsigamond Community College (QCC) and Worcester State University (WSU) by participating in the Early College Program; and
- 5) Rich and exemplary community partners providing professional development, enrichment and social emotional learning.

Notwithstanding noted areas of excellence, the Commission believes improvement is needed at the system level for Latinx and all students to thrive. Specifically, we examined five indicators that bear directly on educational outcomes and early work experiences — third-grade reading proficiency, eighth-grade math proficiency, high school students graduating on time, annual drop-out rates for English learners, and young adults enrolled in postsecondary education. Across all these indicators, Latinx children face long odds for succeeding. This is especially true for Latinx boys who had lower result of each of the five indicators when compared with female peers.

Further, our assessment of the condition of education for Latinx students is informed by facts cited during DESE’s presentation to the School Committee on October 17, 2019. DESE’s data shows that 10 of the District’s 44 schools are ranked in the bottom 10 percentile of all schools in the Commonwealth and that achievement gaps have widened as a result of improvement of top group and stagnant or declining results of lower performing groups, such as Latinx students (See Leading Indicators for Latino Students in Worcester below).

### Leading Indicators for Latino Students in Worcester

	2011 Latinx	2019 Latinx	+/-	All Students WPS 2019	On Par with All Students
HS Graduation	60.7	78.3	+15.9	83.5	X
College Enrollment	57.5	47	-5.2	59.8	X
Meets/Exceeds ELA MCAS 3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	35	26	NA	37	X
Meets/Exceeds MATH MCAS 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	27	13	NA	23	X
English Learner Drop Out Rate	5.1	4.3	-0.8	2.2	X

Source: <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/>



### SCHOOL CULTURE/CLIMATE

Research shows that positive school climate is related to improved academic achievement that places students on a trajectory of achievement beyond the expected level based on student and school socioeconomic factors.<sup>29</sup> Beyond achievement, school climate is a critical factor in behavioral, academic, and mental health outcomes. Positive relationships, student voice, and the development of culturally responsive teachers, staff, and administrators are essential building blocks to a positive school climate.

<sup>29</sup> Berkowitz et al (2016). A Research Synthesis of the Association Between Socioeconomic Background, Inequality, School Climate, and Academic Achievement. Review of Education Research, AERA

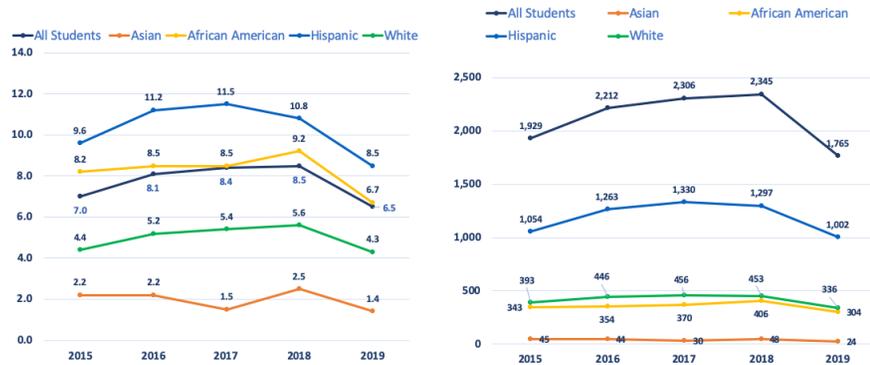
In this context, we found areas for improvement including teacher and staff diversity, school discipline policies, and the development of socioemotional learning opportunities. Specifically, 42.9% of students in Worcester Public Schools (WPS) are Latinx compared with 4% of principals, 7.4% of teachers, 11.1% of guidance counselors, and 11.5% of school psychologists.<sup>30</sup>

In the area of school discipline, as demonstrated by the charts below provided to the School Committee by DESE, Latinx students are over-represented in school discipline measures. In 2019, just over 1,000 Latinx students received some form of school discipline compared to 336 White students and 304 African American Students. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of infractions in WPS are for non-violent and non-drug related incidents, a category that is subjective and more prone to unconscious bias.

Worcester State University’s City Lab found that in Academic Year 2019 Worcester Public Schools experienced a decrease in the number of students receiving suspensions or Emergency Removals from previous years, yet serious racial inequities persist in those who have been disciplined.

City Lab also found WPS lead the state’s urban school districts in Emergency Removals for the past three years. Emergency Removals, which remove students from the classroom without the same due process afforded suspended students, have remained high in Worcester schools even as overall school disciplinary actions have decreased. Between Fall 2017 and May 1, 2019, WPS issued 1,443 Emergency Removals; 267 (18.5%) were offenses that led to suspensions.<sup>31</sup>

### Rate and numbers of students disciplined by race/ethnicity



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education



<sup>30</sup> <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/statereport/teacherbyracegender.aspx>

<sup>31</sup> WPS and DeFacto Suspension (August, 2019), Infographic, Worcester State University City Lab

## What offenses are resulting in student discipline?

	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Number of students	1,765	2,345	2,306	2,212	1,929
Physical attack (battery)	574	611	633	671	650
Bullying	35	0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Physical fight	139	368	373	302	188
Illegal substances	76	76	55	63	81
Non-drug, non-violent or non-criminal-related offense	1,010	1,449	1,644	1,484	1,222
Theft (school, staff or student property)	55	92	0	0	0
Threat of physical attack	309	436	97	105	66
Other violence or substance-related offense	5	10	0	0	0
Weapon on school premises	27	64	58	76	74

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education



Latino families stressed the need for better home school communication and opportunities for Social Emotional Learning. Families are experiencing multiple stressors and seek system change resulting in trauma-sensitive schools. Students emphasized a disconnect with schools that do not include members of their community among all levels of the workforce and a curriculum that did not speak to their history or cultural wealth.

**ACCESS TO KEY RESOURCES:** Throughout our deliberations we heard time and time again from families seeking to find good schools, safe neighborhoods, high quality ESL classes, post-secondary education opportunities, access to living-wage jobs and to the services their children need. These key resources position children for success. The findings below underscore the many barriers faced by Latino families in accessing opportunity generating resources.

1. **EARLY EDUCATION:** There is clear and compelling evidence that high-quality early education has lasting positive value for children and families. In Worcester, there are 14,134 children from birth to age five. Some 34% of these children are Latinx. Some 50% of Worcester’s 3- and 4-year-old children are in early education programs.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, Latinos are significantly under-represented in Worcester Head Start comprising only 18% of all students.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, residents of City of Worcester lag behind residents of other major cities in the Commonwealth in terms of access to early education for children. Thirteen states, including Massachusetts, were awarded Expansion Grants from the U.S. Department of Education in FY14 to

<sup>32</sup> Strategiesforchildren.org/FastFacts/Worcester

<sup>33</sup> Profile.doe.mass.edu/profile/students/Worcester



expand the capacity of high-quality preschool programs to serve additional children in high-need communities. In Massachusetts, five communities (Boston, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, and Springfield) are being funded to implement full-day, full-year preschool for four-year-old through public-private partnerships between the local public school districts and licensed early learning providers. Worcester receive a planning grant from the state in 2016. According to *Strategies for Children* (a foundation that works to ensure that Massachusetts invests in resources for children), the city did not apply for the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative from FY2016 through FY2019 as did the cities of Boston, Lowell, Springfield, Holyoke, Lawrence, North Adams, Somerville, New Bedford, Northampton, Salem, Haverhill, Lee and Lynn.

- 2. HIGHER EDUCATION:** The Commission found that just as college-bound students need to prepare to be college-ready, public higher education institutions in Worcester need to be student ready. There are nine colleges and universities in Worcester serving 30,437 undergraduate students (see Addendum 1). Of those, Quinsigamond Community College (QCC) and Worcester State University (WSU) are the only two public colleges offering undergraduate programs serving 41.5% of all undergraduates in Worcester. Also, QCC and WSU serve almost only students from Massachusetts (97% and 94% respectively) and have the highest percentage of Latinx students of all nine colleges (21% and 12% respectively). Both, QCC and WSU also offer the lowest tuition and still, a large percent of their students has significant financial needs. Fifty-seven percent of QCC students receive federal financial aid and 36% of WSU do too. In addition, WSU and QCC are working together with the City of Worcester to address the issues of inequity in WPS and together with the private colleges, are leading comprehensive efforts to diversify WPS' workforce – from teachers to principals. While QCC and WSU efforts to serve the most underserved and underrepresented populations are commendable and significant progress has been made in admission policies and retention strategies, too many Latinx students enrolled leave before obtaining a degree and accrue debt in the process. Faculty and staff do not reflect the increasingly diverse student body and institutional policies and practices continue to replicate a service model that no longer applies to a changing demographic and education paradigm. Yet, leadership in both institutions acknowledge these challenges creating taskforces to implement equity measures that result in better retention and completion outcomes for students of color. Both institutions have enthusiastically embraced Massachusetts Department of Higher Education's Equity Agenda and have made it their own recognizing that they carry most of the responsibility of educating Worcester's population.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. 2018. Equity Agenda. <https://www.mass.edu/strategic/equity.asp>

Still, opportunity gaps are pervasive in both higher education and elementary and secondary education system. Twenty-one percent of QCC's student body is Latinx. Some 21% of Latinx students completed college level English and math by the end of their first year compared to 34% of white students and 30% of Latinx students attending other community colleges in the Commonwealth.<sup>35</sup> Some 13% of Worcester State University's students are Latinx. Some 50% of WSU's Latinx students completed college level English and math by the end of their first year compared to 64% of white students and 60% of Latinx students enrolled in the Commonwealth's other state universities.<sup>36</sup>

3. **HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION:** Housing, transportation and economic development policies often separate people of color from higher-paying jobs. Businesses were increasingly migrating from cities where most people of color lived to suburban areas that were hard to reach because of a lack of public transportation.<sup>37</sup> Four years ago, a moderate two-bedroom apartment in Worcester and its surrounding communities cost \$1,060 monthly. More than 50% of renters in the Worcester area at that time were unable to afford this level of rent in addition to utilities. An hourly wage of \$20.38 would have been needed to afford this cost, assuming a 40-hour work week, 52 weeks per year. At that time, minimum wage workers earning \$11.00 per hour would need to work 1.9 full-time jobs to be able to afford rent.<sup>38</sup> Housing costs continue to rise in Worcester and availability of affordable housing is a growing issue. In Worcester the majority of Latinx adults are renters (82% versus 42% for white households). Families testified that lack of transportation was a significant barrier in enrolling children in early education and career as well as afterschool programs.
4. **JOBS AND INCOME:** Latinos in Worcester comprise 21% of all residents. Although 60.7% of Latinos are in the labor force, the second highest rate of any subgroup in Worcester, they remain the most likely population to live in poverty with 33.25% living below the poverty level.<sup>39</sup> That means that while Latinos are employed, they are filling the lowest paying jobs in the city, are not getting salary raises or job upgrades, and thus staying in poverty. These jobs also tend not to include health insurance or pension benefits, which improve the quality of life of the population. A recent survey of businesses found that along with the challenge of finding and retaining talent, the most significant factors cited include lack of work-readiness/social-emotional skills, and barriers to employment such as English

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<sup>35</sup> Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. 2018. Equity Agenda. <https://www.mass.edu/datacenter/pmr/quinsigamond.asp>

<sup>36</sup> Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. 2018. Equity Agenda <https://www.mass.edu/datacenter/pmr/worcester.asp>

<sup>37</sup> Pendall, R., Davies, E., Freiman, L., & Pitingolo, R. (2011). A lost decade: Neighborhood poverty and the urban crisis of the 2000s. Washington, DC: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

<sup>38</sup> [https://reports.nihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/OOR\\_2017.pdf](https://reports.nihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/OOR_2017.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> US Census 2018 ACS 5-Year Survey, Table S1601

language competency, and unreliable transportation. This same report found that there are currently over 1,000 people on a waiting list for English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.<sup>40</sup>

5. **HEALTH:** Poverty, low educational attainment and limited job opportunities are among the top social determinants leading to lower utilization of health care services and poor health outcomes. As such, Latinx youth are at high-risk for obesity and chronic diseases related to it, high-risk behaviors, poor oral health and behavioral health issues.<sup>41</sup> Consider that “people who are overweight are more likely to have type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, gall bladder disease, cancer and musculoskeletal disorders (Massachusetts Department of Public Health). Children who are obese at age 8 are 90% more likely to be overweight or obese as adults (Massachusetts Department of Public Health). Worcester children are overweight at twice the national rate of 20.25% obesity for youth entering first grade in the City of Worcester compared to the nationwide average of 10%. Among adults in Worcester County, nearly 70% of Hispanics were overweight or obese.”<sup>42</sup>

Further, the Latinx population is half as likely (19.2% vs 39.5% for the population overall) to have employer-sponsored health insurance according to the 2015 and 2018 Greater Worcester Community Health Assessment and the Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester REACH Narrative. It is also reported that Latino adults, compared to the overall population, are twice as likely to be diagnosed with diabetes (15.9% vs 8.0%) and Latinas in Worcester are nearly three times as likely to have a diabetes diagnosis compared to non-Hispanic white women (11.3% vs 4.1% respectively). The report also states that the age-adjusted rate of mortality due to diabetes related conditions for the Hispanic population is higher than the overall population<sup>43</sup>. In addition, “obesity in the Latino community is prevalent in 40.1% of the population compared to 26.9% or 28.8% of the white and Black populations respectively.” Latinx youth reported having 10% less adequate physical activity when compared to their white peers and the same trend repeats in the adult Latino population.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The Central MA Regional Workforce Blueprint 2018-2022, (2018), Central Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board

<sup>41</sup> Livingston, Gretchen, Susan Minushkin, and D’Vera Cohn. 2018. Hispanics and Chronic Disease in the U.S. Pew Research Center. August 13. <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2008/08/13/ii-hispanics-and-chronic-disease-in-the-u-s/>

<sup>42</sup> UMass Memorial Medical Center, Community Benefits Target Populations FY2018. <https://www.umassmemorialhealthcare.org/sites/umass-memorial-hospital/files/Images/About/UMass%20Memorial%20Medical%20Center%20Target%20Population-s-2018.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> Greater Worcester Community Health Assessment. 2018.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/czi4k05eoapkchx/Greater%20Worcester%20CHA%202018.PDF?dl=0>

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In general, our recommendations are high level and based on the belief that incremental change will not suffice if we are to close the opportunity gap for Latinx students. We do not seek marginal changes in policy or practice but shifts to create a culture of broad ownership over racial equity. We invite the broader community to think big about structural and systemic change.

The urgency is real but so is the opportunity. Urban public schools in Massachusetts will likely experience a major infusion of funds from the state. The composition of the Worcester School Committee is undergoing change. Now is the time for city leaders and the community at large to work together on improving opportunities and outcomes for ALL students.

We thank the Commissioners and community members who offered insightful recommendation at each and every meeting. We did our best to capture everything offered during these meetings in the appendices. The recommendations below represent the will of the body as determined by content analysis and deliberations.

**REBUILDING TRUST:** A prevailing undercurrent during the last 18 months of community conversations and Commission meetings is the palatable and increasing sense of diminished and at times broken trust between members of the Latinx community and Worcester Public Schools. The state of this fractured relationship should be of great concern to the City of Worcester. Latinx students comprise 42.9% of all students in Worcester, the vitality of our city rests in great part on the success of this growing population.

We believe trusting relationships between community, families and schools is paramount to developing thriving schools and igniting a true Worcester renaissance. We hope this report offers direction to shift schools, students, community and families from a polarized “us versus them” paradigm to one where community and schools are united for positive change. This trust should be based on shared decision-making, mutual care for others' well-being, integrity of word and action, transparent communication, reliability characterized by commitment, and professional competency.

The Mayoral Commission was formed as a response to mounting community concern over persistent inequalities in educational outcomes and treatment of Latinx students. The 14 Action Items were in part developed with the assistance of the Co-Chairs for the Mayoral Commission and organizations working for educational justice. We take these repeated calls for change to heart. The way forward must be based on integrity of word and action from all parties.

Based on this construct, the Commission sets forth the following **principles** for rebuilding trust and implementing proposed actions in this report.

1. **Trust will be rebuilt to the extent that community, parents, and students are included at the design table and decision-making process.** It is important that as a community we move from questions about what is being done to our students to becoming active and engaged partners working together with school leadership to



set a new course and budget for schools. A renewed spirit of partnership is needed to make this possible.

2. We must reach a common understanding that WPS, public higher education institutions, and related regulatory bodies have **an obligation to eliminate policies and practices that do not center historically marginalized students** and lead to same unequal and inequitable outcomes.
3. **It is vital to honor commitments made to one another, including the 14 Action Items** previously established by Mayor Petty, the Worcester School Committee and this Commission in partnership with community. To avoid erosion of the public trust, all parties should redouble efforts to accomplish these aims, including due consideration and implementation of the action steps proposed in this report.
4. **In public education, all responsible must be held accountable to high standards of performance.** The district, school committee, elected officials, teachers, principals, families, and students must be held accountable for their respective roles in creating a thriving education system and better outcomes for Latinx students.

In keeping with these principles, the Commission recommends the following **actions** related to **Rebuilding Trust**.

1. **Establish Superintendent’s annual address on the condition of education for Latinx students** including areas of progress and continuing challenges. The address should be shared with school committee as an agenda item.
2. Similar to public statements made by the Mayor of Boston and Superintendent of Boston schools, **issue a public stand with the Mayor of Worcester in support of immigrant youth and schools as a safe zone.** Provide social and emotional support for students experiencing strife and trauma because of immigration policy changes.
3. **WPS should renew Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)** with community-based organizations and other entities serving Latinx students.
4. **The WPS working group charged with reducing suspensions in WPS should be expanded to include parents, community members and organizations.**
5. **Re-evaluate policing in schools.** Compare the current MOU between the Worcester Police Department and WPS establishing ground rules for School Resource Officers (SRO) with the model MOU suggested by the Massachusetts Attorney General. Further, we recommend a full community conversation around policing in schools including the establishment of community oversight measures.
6. **Institute system-wide restorative justice programs** and other alternatives to suspensions.
7. **To protect young male students of color, we recommend a moratorium on suspending elementary and middle school students for failure to follow school rules.** In a recent presentation to the Worcester School Committee, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) noted a high percentage of suspensions (Over 1000 in 2019) in Worcester were for non-violent offenses including failure to follow rules. We applaud WPS for committing to reduce this

number and call for a moratorium until reforms are put in place. This will keep students in school and protect them from discriminatory practices.

8. Follow Boston Public School's policy **banning suspensions for youth in K-3**.

**CALL FOR RACIAL/ETHNIC AND GENDER EQUITY:** As demonstrated in the findings, Latinx students continue to face barriers in opportunity at the systemic and institutional levels. When compared to all other subgroups, Latinx students are more likely to leave high school without earning a diploma, miss days of instruction due to suspensions and emergency removals, and fail to transition to higher education. These inequities are especially true for young men of color. In Massachusetts, only 22% of Latino males graduating from our high schools will graduate with a college degree and only 6% will graduate with a 4-year degree.

In contrast, Latinx students and families have high aspirations for their children and deserve an education system that prepares them for college and career. Indeed, we are motivated by the wealth of knowledge, language, culture, relationships and experiences within the Latinx community and seek to build on these assets as part of the solution to addressing disparate educational outcomes.

The Commission recognizes the many promising practices taking place today in WPS and throughout the education continuum. There is excellence in our schools and institutions of higher education. We note the following examples: Early College for WPS high school students taking credit-bearing classes at QCC and WSU, expansion of vocational opportunities, Worcester Institute for Parental Leadership in Education (WIPLE), an emphasis on trauma-informed practices, and expansion of dual language learning opportunities, among many others. The recommendations below aim to amplify the effects of promising practices and pockets of excellence by identifying and dismantling the structural barriers that prevent system-wide change. The Commission believes an equity-lens priority is needed in Worcester and recommends the following **actions**.

1. **Conduct an equity audit** of WPS similar to one underway in Framingham Public Schools. This process has been conducted by a third party to identify patterns of inequity, potential causes, and strategies to address them. In addition to race and ethnicity, the audit should assess differences based on gender, between schools, and vocational opportunities.
2. **Conduct an equity audit with respect to early education** opportunities in the public and private sectors.
3. **Require all city and school employees to undergo implicit bias training**, as is currently underway in the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education as part of its Equity Agenda.
4. **Create “cultural institutes” to augment implicit bias trainings as a means to promote multi-cultural understanding in the education sector** in conjunction with members of the Latinx community.
5. **Set measurable, tangible goals and strategies in conjunction with community members to diversify the education workforce including teachers, senior administrators and principals.** At present, one of the 44 school principals in

Worcester is Latinx and less than 10% of teachers are Latinx in a system where Latinx students comprise 42% of the population.

6. **Institute culturally responsive and sustaining curricula and pedagogy** by evaluating core curricula offerings to measure the extent materials represent students of different backgrounds. WPS students and parents felt strongly about lack of representation of the Latinx and other people of color's culture, historical figures, and contributions to the United States throughout history and suggested an **ethnic studies class** be added to the civic education course list.
7. Increased asset-based approaches that **utilize student funds of knowledge, language and culture, multiple intelligences and outside resources** to provide diverse tools, strategies, and role models.
8. **Partner with Worcester State University's Latino Education Institute** and other organizations to provide professional development, extra-curricular enrichments to increase multicultural knowledge.
9. **Culturally responsive outreach to and substantive involvement of families from all groups** in varied aspects of the educational program, both planning and instructional. DESE recommends the Parent Institute of Quality Education (PIQE) as best practice. Worcester was the first district in the Commonwealth to implement PIQE and we recommend WPS return to the best practice cohort of the state.
10. **Commission a third-party analysis of frameworks and opportunities for English Language Learners.** Given recent involvement of the Department of Justice related to services for English language learners coupled with strong community sentiment related to the robustness of bilingual education offerings, a published report establishing baseline and goals is called for.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** We recognize that education is a highly regulated area with multiple and overlapping accountability regimes. More of this type of accountability is not what we propose. Instead, we seek mechanisms to provide accountability to families and students from a wide array of responsible entities.

1. **City leaders should institute a participatory budgeting process** to allow for an equity-based framework against which to make budget and revenue decisions. Unless the school budget process is more transparent, especially in this era of increased state funding, the fundamental needs and rights of marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented communities may not be addressed.
2. In order to strengthen local democracy and assure a school committee that better reflects the student population, **city leaders should consider alternative methods of electing and appointing school committee members.** Currently, school committee members are at large as opposed to by district. The city of Lowell recently changed how it elects school committee members after eleven Lowell residents sued the city on the grounds that the current at-large method of electing members school committee violates the Federal Voting Rights Act and the U.S. Constitution by diluting the votes of minority residents of the city. We note that Latinx students comprise 42.9% of all public-school students and at present, there are no members of the school committee from this sector of the community.

3. All information, recommendation, and reports produced as part of the **14 Action Items should be an agenda item at the school committee and city council in every meeting.** At the time of this report, this Commission was unable to get an update of the status of 14 Action Items.
4. **Institute a community advisory board to advise the work of the Chief Diversity Officer** and track progress towards a more diverse education workforce.
5. **The Mayoral Commission should be included as one of the Boards and Commissions under the City Manager** charged with **measuring progress towards the goals of this report – rebuilding trust, assuring equity, and maintaining accountability.**
6. **The implementation team for the Worcester Public School strategic plan should include an equity advisory committee** to inform implementation of the strategic plan on goals related to equity especially in the areas of school discipline, hiring, ELL services, vocational opportunities, cultural competency, and college access. Community members did not believe adequate representation in the process exists at present.
7. **We must hold our public higher education institutions accountable for reaching the goals set in the DHE’s Equity Agenda calling for eliminating graduation and support gaps for students of color.** While community colleges and state universities are enrolling greater numbers of Latinx students, too many students fail to graduate and encounter significant structural barriers. The DHE found that if gaps closed between Latinx and white peers starting with high school (persistence and graduation) through college (enrollment, retention and graduation) between 2025 and 2038 the Latinx students with degrees would increase by 75,000 in the Commonwealth. To meet these goals Massachusetts must invest in public higher education, we can no longer be satisfied to rank 45<sup>th</sup> in the nation in funding post-secondary institutions.

**QUALITY OF LIFE: HEALTH, HOUSING, AND WEALTH:** Life opportunities differ greatly among populations in Worcester. In this section, we capture recommendations concerning disparities in social and structural determinants of health that negatively affect advancement and well-being. For context, we note here from the 2015 and 2018 Greater Worcester Community Health Assessment and the Coalition for a Healthy Greater Worcester REACH Narrative:

“Latinx households are substantially more likely to live in a home they rent rather than own compared to every other racial and ethnic group, with 82% of Latino households living in a rental compared to 46% for white households. This distinction is critical when considering the environments in which families live and grow. Similarly, 17% of Latinx workers in Worcester get to work by walking, biking, or taking public transit compared to 10% of the overall population, indicating that Latinx workers are more likely to be exposed and effected to walking, biking, or transit infrastructure in poor condition. More, the Latino population is half as likely (19.2% vs 39.5% for the population overall) to have employer-sponsored health insurance.”

1. Notwithstanding pending guidance from the Commonwealth, work expeditiously with community members to **select and implement comprehensive sex education curriculum.** The curriculum must be about the whole person and conform with



standards set by the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States that states that appropriate sex education “includes age-appropriate, medically accurate information on a broad set of topics related to sexuality including human development, relationships, decision-making, abstinence, contraception, and disease prevention.” Such curriculum should include discussions of sexual consent, harassment and sexual orientation.

2. To address concerns about the lack of affordable housing, the **city should re-examine how it calculates the number of low-income and moderate housing being constructed downtown.** At present, according to directors of local community development corporations, these are calculated on Worcester county income figure averages as opposed to income figures for Worcester proper.
3. The City of Worcester’s recently released **Comprehensive Cultural Plan** and Latinx leaders should be part of the implementation action plan.
4. Local colleges should partner with community to assess the **availability and use of public space and recreation programs from a Latinx lens.**
5. **Plans to overhaul the transportation system must consider access and affordability.** Moreover, transportation to early education providers, including WPS offerings should be prioritized as civil rights consideration.
6. **Examine wage gaps by gender and race** in the public sector in Worcester.
7. Highlight the **contributions of Latinx businesses in Worcester.**
8. Work with the non-profit, community development, and philanthropic organizations to ensure **Latinx representation on staff and boards.**
9. Build on existing efforts in the Latinx community to identify and **develop emerging leaders.**

## NEXT STEPS, PRIORITIES AND TIMELINE

The Commission shares the community's concern that the recommendations must lead to action.<sup>45</sup> Historically, the work of previous groups and commissions only yielded limited progress and did not result in significant systemic changes. Thus, the Commission requests that the following steps, accountability measures, and actions take place to ensure that the recommendations lead to necessary change:

1. **By February 1, 2021**, Worcester City's Mayor Office should create a clearly marked link and page on its official website to publish the Commission's report and devote the necessary resources to support the dissemination of the report to all interested parties. In addition, the Mayor should hold a public meeting, with the Commission, to discuss the report.
2. **By May 31, 2021**, the Mayoral Commission will present the report to the Worcester Public Schools Committee at one of its regular meetings, allowing for initial questions and answers, and referred to appropriate sub-committees for further review of the report and the report's recommendations.
3. **By June 30, 2021** Worcester's Mayor, Joseph Petty will establish a permanent and official city Commission on Latino Affairs<sup>46</sup> to continue the work of the Mayoral Commission on Latinos in Worcester Public Schools who issued this report. This new Commission on Latino Affairs will set objectives, expected outcomes, timelines, accountability measures, and reporting processes to ensure continued progress on the implementation of the Mayoral Commission on Latinos in Worcester Public Schools' recommendations noted in this report, addressing any necessary systemic change. To accomplish their work the Commission on Latino Affairs needs access to data and will work with the City of Worcester, the School Committee, local colleges, universities, and the Regional Research Bureau to identify measures and benchmark for determining data informed progress on achieving goals and enacting the recommendations. The School Committee will also appoint a task group to review the impact of CoVid-19 on the Worcester's Latino student community.
4. **By October 31, 2021** Worcester's Mayor, City Manager, and Council will take the necessary steps to identify and contract an experienced external firm or research group to conduct the recommended equity audits.
5. Once the Mayor establishes the Commission on Latino Affairs, referenced above, the school superintendent should provide quarterly updates on ongoing progress made on the 14 Action items agreed upon with the School Committee. The

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<sup>45</sup> This timeline was revised in light of CoVid-19 pandemic.

<sup>46</sup> The Latino Empowerment and Organizing Network (LEON) - a Worcester City wide multisector coalition of Latino leaders working on articulating a policy agenda that will improve the lives of Latinos in Worcester - met with Mayor Joseph Petty and City Manager, Edward M. Augustus on December 14, 2020. In this meeting, LEON' steering committee requested to the Mayor and City Manager the creation of a citywide permanent Commission on Latino Affairs, petition that was granted. LEON is currently working on a comprehensive proposal regarding this Commission, its mission, objectives, and responsibilities.



superintendent should also provide updates on other matters that might be relevant to the education of Latino students in the city.

6. **By March 31, 2022**, the newly established Commission on Latino Affairs should present its preliminary action plan, metrics, measures, expected outcomes, and timeline.

## ADDENDUM 1

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS <sup>47</sup>						
College or University	Public Private	# Undergrad Students	% Students Admitted	% Students from MA	% Latinx Students	% Students Pell Grant
<b>Quinsigamond Community College</b>	Public	7263	Open Door	97%	21%	57%
<b>Worcester State University</b>	Public	5380	78%	94%	13%	36%
<b>Assumption College</b>	Private	2063	81%	64%	8%	22%
<b>Becker College</b>	Private	1824	66%	55%	9%	39%
<b>MCPHS University<sup>48</sup></b>	Private	3996	93%	54%	8%	32%
<b>Worcester Polytechnic Institute</b>	Private	4668	42%	42%	9%	10%
<b>College of the Holy Cross</b>	Private	2939	38%	37%	10%	15%
<b>Clark University</b>	Private	2304	59%	32%	9%	22%
<b>UMASS Medical School</b>	Public	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

<sup>47</sup> Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System – Data as of January 26, 2020. All nine colleges serve a total of 30,437 undergraduate students of which 17,794 (58.2%) attend private and 12,643 (41.5%) attend public colleges.

<sup>48</sup> Data for the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (MCPHS) University, Worcester campus, is aggregated with the information for the whole school and reported as part of the Boston campus.

X. GENERAL BUSINESS  
Administration/Mayor Petty  
(July 14, 2020)

CURRENT ITEM - gb #9-327.1  
S.C. MEETING - 7-16-20

1ST ITEM gb #9-327 S.C.MTG. 11-7-19  
2ND ITEM gb #9-327.1 S.C.MTG. 7-16-20

ITEM:

To provide an update on the fourteen Action Steps made by Mayor Petty and approved by the School Committee:

1. School Department to create clear and transparent process to provide the necessary, student-sensitive data needed to do a thorough review of the suspension rates in our Worcester Public Schools. This should include the last 7 years of data.
2. Worcester State University to re-engage with our school department regarding the 2014 report, "Suspension in Worcester: A Continuing Conversation.
3. Incorporate comprehensive training practices focused on understanding cultural differences, unconscious bias, understanding racial disparities, and trauma informed care for all staff. Included in this training is MGL c222. For all staff including School Committee.
4. Review of the state's school discipline statute, MGL c222, to ensure the city is in complete compliance with the law and make any necessary changes to our policies and procedures.
5. Continue to maintain an English Language Learner Parent Advisory Council that includes Community Based Organizations and Community Partners in compliance with law, which will work with both the Director of English Language Learners and the Chief Diversity Officer.
6. Review the practice of out of school suspension for students in K-2 grade and work with community partners and internal staff to create an in-school program to provide counselling and assessment services for these students, contingent on proper funding and in-kind services.
7. Create an Affirmative Action Advisory Committee that would work with the Human Resource Department and the Chief Diversity Officer. Provide a semiannual report to the School Committee, with the Human Resources Department and the Chief Diversity Officer, as to progress.
8. Create a Superintendents Latino Advisory Committee
9. Quarterly/biannual reports on the progress of the Strategic Plan
10. Review and maintain the existing suspension hearing and appeal practices so that the same WPS person is not allowed to do both hearings and appeals.
11. Hiring a Chief Diversity Officer who shall report to the Superintendent and who shall work collaboratively with the Department of Human Resources of the Worcester Public Schools.
12. Review and assist a comprehensive plan with college presidents to do focused recruitment and retention plans to hire diverse teachers and support staff.
13. Provide a semi-annual report on the work of the English Language Learner Department and programs to the School Committee on compliance with best practices and Federal DOE guidelines.
14. Work with the School Committee to consider and implement recommendations of the Mayors Commission where appropriate. Work with the Commission to benchmark projects.

BACKUP:

Annex A (17 pages) contains a copy of the Administration's response to the item.

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:

RECOMMENDATION OF ADMINISTRATION:

Accept and file.

**(Continued on Page 2)**

(continued)

ORIGINAL ITEM: Administration/Mayor Petty (October 7, 2019)

To consider answers to the fourteen Action Steps made by Mayor Petty and approved by the School Committee:

1. School Department to create clear and transparent process to provide the necessary, student-sensitive data needed to do a thorough review of the suspension rates in our Worcester Public Schools. This should include the last 7 years of data.
2. Worcester State University to re-engage with our school department regarding the 2014 report, "Suspension in Worcester: A Continuing Conversation.
3. Incorporate comprehensive training practices focused on understanding cultural differences, unconscious bias, understanding racial disparities, and trauma informed care for all staff. Included in this training is MGL c222. For all staff including School Committee.
4. Review of the state's school discipline statute, MGL c222, to ensure the city is in complete compliance with the law and make any necessary changes to our policies and procedures.
5. Continue to maintain an English Language Learner Parent Advisory Council that includes Community Based Organizations and Community Partners in compliance with law, which will work with both the Director of English Language Learners and the Chief Diversity Officer.
6. Review the practice of out of school suspension for students in K-2 grade and work with community partners and internal staff to create an in-school program to provide counselling and assessment services for these students, contingent on proper funding and in-kind services.
7. Create an Affirmative Action Advisory Committee that would work with the Human Resource Department and the Chief Diversity Officer. Provide a semiannual report to the School Committee, with the Human Resources Department and the Chief Diversity Officer, as to progress.
8. Create a Superintendents Latino Advisory Committee
9. Quarterly/biannual reports on the progress of the Strategic Plan
10. Review and maintain the existing suspension hearing and appeal practices so that the same WPS person is not allowed to do both hearings and appeals.
11. Hiring a Chief Diversity Officer who shall report to the Superintendent and who shall work collaboratively with the Department of Human Resources of the Worcester Public Schools.
12. Review and assist a comprehensive plan with college presidents to do focused recruitment and retention plans to hire diverse teachers and support staff.
13. Provide a semi-annual report on the work of the English Language Learner Department and programs to the School Committee on compliance with best practices and Federal DOE guidelines.
14. Work with the School Committee to consider and implement recommendations of the Mayors Commission where appropriate. Work with the Commission to benchmark projects.

PRIOR ACTION

- 10-17-19 Held for the meeting of Thursday, November 7, 2019.
- 11-7-19 - Mayor Petty requested that the item containing the responses to the 14 Action Steps be referred to the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports for further discussion.
- 7-16-20 - On a roll call of 6-0-1 (absent Miss Biancheria), the item was referred to the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports

### **ACTION ITEM 1**

1. School Department to create a clear and transparent process to provide the necessary, student-sensitive data needed to do a thorough review of the suspension rates in our Worcester Public Schools. This should include the last 7 years of data.

#### **ANSWER**

Full discipline data for 2018-2019 has not yet been released by DESE. Although Mr. Robert Curtin from DESE did present an abbreviated version of Worcester's discipline data as part of his data presentation at School Committee on October 17<sup>th</sup>, full data has yet to be released. Specifically, state-wide data and data for other urban districts has not been released. Additionally, full discipline data is only available for seven years. When full 2018-2019 is made available by DESE, the Administration will provide a full report on the past seven years to the School Committee.

**Update July 2020: The Superintendent provided a discipline update to the community, which included State Senators and Representatives, Congressman McGovern, District Attorney Joseph Early, School Committee members, principals, teachers and community groups on January 31, 2020. The update included a review of discipline data from 2015 through December 2019.**

### **ACTION ITEM 2**

2. Worcester State University to re-engage with our school department regarding the 2014 report, "Suspension in Worcester: A Continuing Conversation.

#### **ANSWER**

The Memorandum of Agreement between Worcester State University and the Worcester Public Schools is still being reviewed by legal counsel from both groups.

**Update July 2020: The WPS continues to work with DESE to review and analyze data. WPS is also assigned Joan Tuttle, Director of West, Central Regional Assistance, Statewide System of Support and her team to work with the WPS on a regular basis. Additionally, secondary and elementary principals met with the district monthly through February to analyze data, assess the impact of related action steps, and propose next steps The March meeting was preempted by the unexpected shutdown.**

### **ACTION ITEM 3**

3. Incorporate comprehensive training practices focused on understanding cultural differences, unconscious bias, understanding racial disparities, and trauma informed care for all staff. Included in this training is MGL c222. For all staff including the School Committee.

#### **ANSWER**

The following training and practices commenced in August 2019 through June 2020. These trainings will address welcoming schools, transitioning students in grades 7 and 9, discipline interventions, building strong leaders, the Barr Grant, turnaround professional practice training, culturally responsive instruction and curriculum, understanding resiliency and DESE Access and Equity Training.

1. Welcoming Schools: One focus for 2019-20 is improving how welcoming our schools are for students, staff and parents. Each WPS will convene a welcoming committee that includes students, parents, school staff to meet monthly. The committee will discuss and implement welcoming schools initiatives. The focus of the Superintendent's Student Advisory Council will be to develop a student handbook that welcomes students to each high school.

**Update July 2020: Welcoming Schools is now a section of the annual, individual School Accountability Plan. Each School developed action steps for the 2019-2020 school year. The Superintendent's Student Advisory Council's "Welcome Handbook" will be completed in the 2020-21 school year due to the COVID school shutdown.**

2. In June 2019, WPS educators participated in a professional development program that focused on learning about families and the community in the Woodland/Claremont area by going out and exploring the community and visiting families in their homes. This Community Immersion PD was designed for engagement beyond our school walls. The Administration plans to replicate and expand this experience in the current school year.

Update July 2020: Planning commenced for a similar summer PD for the Clark Street Community School neighborhood. The program will be held when circumstances allow.

3. Dr. Stuart Ablon, author of "The Discipline Fix" and "Changeable: How Collaborative Problem Solving Changes Lives at Home, at School and at Work", provided a full day training to all WPS district leaders, focused instructional coaches, and curriculum liaisons. Dr. Ablon has researched why discipline challenges occur. "Challenging behavior is linked with deficits in the following areas of neuro-cognitive skills: Language and communication skills (e.g., Willcutt 2008), attention and working memory skills (e.g., Cohen 2003), emotion and self-regulation skills (e.g., Stieben et al., 2007), cognitive flexibility skills (e.g., Van Goozen et al., 2004) and social thinking skills (e.g., Dodge et al., 2003)

Discipline Goals of Intervention are as follows:

1. Pursue high priority expectations
2. Reduce challenging behavior
3. Solve chronic problems durably
4. Build skills, confidence (ie, intrinsic motivation)
5. Create (or restore) a helping relationship

Dr. Ablon will be providing additional training on the collaborative problem solving approach for district leadership and school leadership and staff. An introductory overview was provided on October 23, 2019. Future, targeted on-site training will include; grade 9 team representatives (Assistant Principal, one teacher per team, school guidance counselor, school adjustment counselor, and behavior specialists) This is a multi-year initiative. The 2019- 20 school year will focus on Tier 1 training and 6 months of coaching. All participants will receive the text, The Discipline Fix.

Update July 2020: School based teams from each secondary school and two elementary sites completed Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) Training for Tier 1 on January 8, 9 and 10, 2020. Each participating team developed an implementation plan and began initial site based implementation. Biweekly, virtual coaching by Collaborative Problem Solving is currently being planned to support implementation. CPS has been coaching teams servicing students face to face and, more recently, in the virtual environment. District and school leadership, management, principals and assistant principals, received this training on June 15, 16, 17 and 18. Each of these teams developed or reviewed their school implementation plan and submitted to the district for review. The district is partnering with Think Kids: Collaborative Problem to submit a federal grant for 8 elementary schools in August 2020. Collaborative Problem Solving training will be deepening and extended for the 2020-2021 school year.

4. Michael Fullan, world renowned researcher on systemic school change, author of Nuanced Leader, provided a full day workshop to school and district leadership on embracing change, collaboration on common problems of practice, and building a strong culture within the district. All participants received the text for summer reading, "Nuance: Why Some Leaders Succeed and Others Fail".

5. Dr. Heather Forkey, Director of UMASS Trauma Team, is training principals and school adjustment counselors who will train all staff at their schools. The five areas of training are ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences), anxiety, mindset, transitions and problems of practice. All WPS staff will continue to receive training every other month. School adjustment counselors will facilitate school based training and work with school administration to coach implementation of strategies during the school day.

Update July 2020: The WPS is planning with Dr. Forkey and other health professionals to continue with these staff trainings on trauma informed teaching and the development of resilience in the 2020-2021 school year.

6. Barr Grant - The WPS has applied for a continuation of the current Barr Grant. Area of focus is Grade 9 in all high schools. Principal and VP of Claremont Academy, Principals of North and South High and Sullivan Middle School traveled with the district team to Mission Vista Tech High in San Diego, CA. If successful in receiving the grant, WPS will work with the Rennie Center and Next Generation Learning. By Spring 2020, a Portrait of a Graduate will be completed.

Update July 2020: The Portrait of a Graduate framework was developed through collaboration with a diverse group of district stakeholders: students, a core team of teachers across grade levels, administrators, parents and community based organizations including colleges and workforce development and many of the city's agencies that support our students. This work will continue with the support of the Barr Foundation and their partner, NGLC (Next Generation Learning Challenges). It will be finalized in the Spring of the 2020-2021 school year.

The Barr Foundation's flexibility during this time of the COVID 19 disruption has allowed the district to refocus funds and enhance goals and objectives already underway in the district. The collection of student readiness data, now grades 7-12 instead of only grade 9, will allow professional staff to closely monitor students when they are "on or off track" for graduation and post-secondary success. Exposure to Strengths Based Leadership by a small group of secondary school leaders in January can now be expanded to include **all** building leaders K-12 as well as those that they identify as their leadership team within their buildings. The district's goal is to build a Strengths Based Leadership Model that will strongly support implementation and ongoing improvement in education in Worcester Public Schools.

Also, through the Barr Funds, the Rennie Center has been commissioned and has partnered with the Worcester Public Schools to "tell our story of growth and development" that is tied directly to the progress on the Strategic Plan.

7. WPS received a grant to train all high school assistant principals and one AP from each middle school on Culturally Responsive Instruction. It was a 3 day training and was completed on October 11, 2019. The training was conducted by Assabet Collaborative. The target audience was Assistant Principals from middle and high schools. Main themes were:
  - Self-exploration on blind spots and biases
  - Deepen viewpoints & experiences related to identity, diversity, achievement, & learning;
  - Increase understanding of the history of educational inequity in the U.S,
  - Develop a lens for detecting and disrupting bias in school climate, practices and policies through the principles, elements and tools of the cultural proficiency continuum;
  - Develop skills to intervene and advance the thinking/learning of others through practice;
  - Develop an Action Plan for next steps in your life and work
8. Dr. Gisiele Martin-Kniep, CEO of Learner-Centered Initiatives, began her work with the district on October 10, 2019. Dr. Martin-Kniep's work is targeted with middle and high school staff and district leaders on a culturally responsive curriculum. She has extensive experience in this area and has trained the New York City schools previously on a culturally responsive curriculum.

Update July 2020: Dr. Martin-Kniep worked with the Turnaround School Networks, elementary and secondary, throughout the year identifying culturally responsive pedagogy and applications in context. This work within the network included identifying implicit biases in the perspectives/orientations of instructional frames and resources used. The Claremont and Sullivan Middle School staff had ongoing professional development on the topic with application to their school based work. During the shutdown, Dr. Martin-Kniep also worked with the Office of Curriculum and Professional Development liaisons focused on professional learning support that targeted rigor through questioning. Culturally responsive teaching was framed with particular attention to engagement and rigor. The work involved examining criteria for facilitating the evaluation of materials.

9. For the second year, WPS staff will participate in a virtual book study of the text "Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain" by Zaretta Hammond. Last year, 40 participants completed this interactive book study experience. Dr. Hammond is considered the foremost expert on Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) and her book provides concrete strategies for teachers across grade levels and subjects to make their classrooms as culturally responsive as possible.

Update July 2020: This year 20 staff participated in the "Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain" book study sponsored through the ELL Department. Additionally, managers participated in a related Edweek webinar with Hammond and DeWitt on July 1, "Culturally Responsive Teaching: How to Improve Your Impact in the Physical and Virtual Classroom". Hammond's work aligns with Dr. Martin-Kniep with a focus on equity and rigor in classrooms through culturally responsive practices.

10. WSU Diversity Grant: This program is in progress with WSU. This program provides instruction/training to WPS IAs. Currently, 18 IAs are participating in the education tract and 13 are on track to graduate with a post BAC in June 2020. 18 additional IAs students are enrolled in the undergraduate program and are taking their first college class this Fall.

Update July 2020: Six have graduated and completed their licensure. Out of the remaining ten, five are on track to graduate in December 2020 and five are on track to graduate in May 2021. There are 13 new JET participants for 2020-21, five are diverse candidates. The district has reapplied for this grant and will be notified this summer.

11. Monday, October 28, 2019, 5:00 to 7:00 pm. Linda Nathan, founder and headmaster of the Boston Arts Academy, Boston's first and only public high school for the visual and performing arts, educational author and researcher, will share her research and facilitate conversation about ways to address roadblocks to our students' post- secondary success. A book signing will follow of her latest publication, "When Grit Isn't Enough: A High School Principal Examines Poverty and Inequality and the College for All Promise". The Worcester Public Schools is co-sponsoring this event with the Latino Education Institute at Worcester State University.

12. Thursday, October 24, 2019, DESE 2nd Annual Leading with Access and Equity Convening Forum: District Leadership team participated in various workshops that focused on systems and strategies to meet students' holistic needs and ensure that every child has equitable access to a world-class education. The event represents a collaboration across multiple offices and initiatives at DESE and will focus on topics including, but not limited to: creating a pipeline of diverse educators, developing multi-tiered systems of support, equitable access to high quality curriculum, bilingual education, ensuring racial and cultural equity, effectively engaging families, student mobility, approaches to addressing students' mental health needs, integrating social emotional and academic learning, and more. Participants: DESE expects to have approximately 600 participants from across the Commonwealth representing state, district, and school leaders, classroom educators, student support staff, community and family partners, and others.

Update July 2020: Manager Carmen Melendez was invited to participate in a conference sponsored by presenter Dr. Irvin Scott on her work in Worcester engaging families in schooling through their faith based groups.

Conference presenters will present to district leadership in 2020-2021. On August 18, 2020, Dr. Irvin Leon Scott, Senior Lecturer on Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education, will present "Leading for Access and Equity" to district administrators, principals and managers. Dr. Novak, who also presented, will offer a workshop to district administrators, principals, liaisons and focused instructional coaches on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in the context of access and equity. See below.

13. Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Katie Novak presented to all coaches, liaisons, and several managers on UDL and how to incorporate into our classrooms. North High and a team of District Administrators are part of the DESE Inclusive Practice Academy incorporating UDL.

Update July 2020: All school and district leaders are reading Dr. Katie Novak's latest book, "Unlearning" and will attend district training on August 24, 2020.

14. "Leadership for Equity and Access", a full day workshop with Irvin Leon Scott, Senior Lecturer on Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education, will be held Thursday, August 18, 2020 for district principals and management. The related summer book study is being determined. (<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/faculty/irvin-scott>)

Update July 2020: See number 12 above. The timing was changed to a 2 hour presentation and discussion because of the virtual format.

15. World Language Ambassadors: The World Language Department, in collaboration with the Deputy Superintendent's Office, is providing opportunities for high school World Language students to participate in an after-school club that will develop lesson plans to teach Spanish, French and possibly other languages to elementary schools through after-school programs. It is planned that these high school students, who become our WPS World Language Ambassadors, will also play an integral role in our Welcoming Schools Committees that are being instituted in every WPS school.

Update July 2020: The program was well received. It ran during the school day at Burncoat High School/Thorndyke Road and Doherty High/Midland Street. It was offered after school at South High/Gates Lane, North High/Union Hill and Claremont/Woodland Academy. Between 10 and 15 high school students worked with language teachers to develop the lessons to bring to the elementary schools. Between 20 and 30 elementary students were involved at each site. Feedback from students, teachers and administrators was very positive. A final closing event at Assumption College was not held due to the closure.

16. October 15, 2019 - Michael Giangreco, Ph.D.: Rethinking Service Delivery and Personnel Utilization to Support Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms. District participants included principals, school based teams, general education and special education staff.

Update July 2020: This workshop was designed to target participants such as; principals, school based teams, general education and special education staff . The focus of this professional development training addressed the redesign of instructional strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners in general education classrooms. Emphasis on universal design to learning, differentiated instruction to improve academic outcomes for SWD in general education to access content standards. Participants engaged in a variety of activities to understand the learning styles of students and evidenced based strategies to support SWD in general education classrooms. Participants included the following staff: Assistant Director of Special Education, System wide SPED Department Heads, General Education teachers, bilingual diagnostician, Middle School Special Needs Teachers, Guidance Counselor, and Evaluation Team Chairpersons. The district is considering presenting this workshop this coming school year to expand participants to principals and school based teams.

17. October 11, 2019 Special Education Clinicians and Behavioral Consultants participated in a comprehensive training on Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy (TF-CBT). This approach is an evidence-based treatment for children and adolescents impacted by trauma and their parents or caregivers. Research shows that TF-CBT successfully resolves a broad array of emotional and behavioral difficulties associated with single, multiple and complex trauma experiences. This is the official TF- CBT National Therapist Certification Program, in which clinicians can become certified in the TF-CBT treatment model.

In this workshop, participants learned an evidence based treatment modality for children and adolescents as well as strategies to improve functioning.

Update July 2020: 19 Special Education Behavior Specialists, 3 Behavior Consultants, and 1 Special Education Department Head attended the Trauma Focused - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) two day workshop on October 10th and 11th, 2019 led by Dr. Jessica Griffin. Dr. Jessica Griffin is an associate professor of psychiatry and pediatrics, as well as the executive director of the Child Trauma Training Center, at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. 17 of the 23 staff members, who attended the two day TF-CBT workshop, chose to attend twelve follow up TF-CBT consultation sessions led by Dr. Griffin in order to obtain certification as TF-CBT clinicians. Dr. Griffin provided these consultation sessions pro bono to the district. The 12 follow up consultation sessions were scheduled beginning on February 11, 2020 and ending on July 21st outside of work hours. There is one more session left for July 21st. The anticipated outcome is that the majority (75%) of the behavior specialists working within the Structured Therapeutic Education Program (STEP) and COAST classrooms will be eligible for certification as trauma focused cognitive behavioral therapists. As referenced in the above description of TF-CBT, it is a therapeutic approach that addresses the needs of youth with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other challenges and symptoms related to traumatic life events. Many of the students in Worcester Public Schools, who we service in the Special Education Department, have experienced traumatic life events for which they need clinical support to: (1) develop trusting relationships, (2) build upon social skills, and (2) identify and apply coping skills. An evidence-based approach, such as TF-CBT, will assist with this endeavor.

18. SY' 2019 -20 Professional Practices Symposium for Behavioral Analysts: Developing Effective ABA Programs in Public School Systems to promote targeted interventions to address learning objectives and social skills needs of students with disabilities

Update July 2020: During the SY 2019 -2020 the special education department supported the initiative of BCBA's to engage in a Professional Practices Symposium for Behavioral Analysts: Developing Effective ABA Programs in Public School Systems to promote targeted interventions to address learning objectives and social skills needs of students with disabilities. This initiative symposium was through the ACCEPT Collaborative as participants included (10) Board Certified Behavioral Analysts (BCBA's). This learning opportunity provided explicit training to district BCBA's on targeted evidenced based interventions to meet the diverse needs of SWD. Training requirements also included on-going monthly meetings throughout the school year. Feedback from participants was that the PD was highly useful and effective in building collaboration and consistency in the delivery of applied behavioral analysis (ABA) programming which has enhanced our district autism services. Also, the outcome of this training directly impacted the needs of our autism students as BCBA's promoted evidenced based intervention strategies both in our schools and through service delivery options for home autism ABA services. This also included strengthening the evaluation process in the area of trauma informed functional behavioral analysis.

19. Preschool Teachers and Preschool Classroom Instructional Assistants were trained on the Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG) Observational Assessment the first week of school. TSG is an authentic, ongoing observational system for assessing children from birth through grade 3. It is based on 38 objectives for development and learning that include predictors of school success and are based on school readiness standards that align with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. See the Massachusetts birth.

This assessment offered teachers a variety of online tools to gather and organize meaningful data, including online portfolios where children's work could be stored. The system also generated comprehensive reports that could be customized and shared with families.

Update July 2020: The observational assessment TSG was implemented and ongoing support was provided to teachers for implementation. This will continue next year.

The response regarding training for staff and School Committee as to MGL c222 is contained in Action Step 4.

#### **ACTION ITEM 4**

4. Review of the state's school discipline statute, MGL c222, to ensure the city is in complete compliance with the law and make any necessary changes to our policies and procedures.

#### **ANSWER**

All district processes and policies have been reviewed for compliance with MGL Chapter 222 by legal counsel and found to be fully in compliance. Legal counsel provided professional development and updates to all principals prior to the start of the 2019-20 school year .

#### **ACTION ITEM 5**

5. Continue to maintain an English Language Learner Parent Advisory Council that includes Community Based Organizations and Community Partners in compliance with law, which will work with both the Director of English Language Learners and the Chief Diversity Officer.

#### **ANSWER**

Worcester Public Schools (WPS) continues to maintain and further develop the English Language Learner Parent Advisory Council (ELPAC) to promote and support the success of our English language learners. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) published guidance on the council formation in August 2018. (See: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/guidance/>)

In the 2018-2019 school year, our focus was on introducing the group and purpose to our families, engaging families' interest, and soliciting parent leaders. Topics were generated by the interest of the parents that participated in the previous meeting. Interpreters of the following languages were always represented at each meeting: Albanian, Arabic, Nepali, Portuguese, Spanish, Swahili, Twi, and Vietnamese.

Update July 2020: The Office of English Learner Programs has engaged with families and communities throughout the 2019-2020 school year in order to foster collaboration and facilitate communication to support our shared goal of success for every student. We have sustained our work through ELPAC, community partnerships, and information sessions.

Our ELPAC was off to a strong start this year. We formed a planning committee composed of volunteer ELPAC parents who were interested in taking a leadership role. On the evening of December 29, 2019, the planning committee that included parents, met to identify topics of interest and to prioritize a focus for subsequent meetings. We also invited our community partners to be part of this planning meeting. At this meeting, we had two priorities: establishing the goals of the ELPAC and identifying a central location. At this planning meeting with parents we had three questions guiding the discussion: *What information do parents want/need to share with the district?*, *What information do parents want/need to know from the district?*, and *What are the areas or issues we want/need to work on together?* Identifying a location that was central and accessible to as many parents as possible was another important priority. To address this priority, we were able to partner with Creative Hub who provided both the space and an art activity for children while their parents were meeting. Our ELPAC meeting held January 30, 2020 at the Creative Hub was very well attended (standing room only) and parents provided positive feedback on the experiences. The overwhelming response of the families caused us to think about possibly having a quadrant-based ELPAC as we thought accommodating growth would post a challenge for both locations and support from interpreters. This idea will be explored further with the parents in future meetings.

We continued our work with the planning committee and met again on March 5, 2020 to reflect on our January ELPAC meeting and to plan for the next ELPAC meeting. Due to the shutdown, we were unable to hold the remaining two planned ELPAC meetings for the year. However, we met virtually one last time with our planning committee on June 10, 2020 to discuss current challenges families are facing and ideas for our collaborative work moving forward.

### **ELPAC Meetings 2019-2020**

- December 19, 2019: ELPAC Planning Committee Meeting, Forest Grove
- January 3, 2020: ELPAC Meeting, Creative Hub
- March 5 2020: ELPAC Planning Committee Meeting, YWCA - Main St.
- June 10, 2020: ELPAC Planning Committee Meeting, Virtual

Our goal for 2020-2021 is to gradually release the coordination of the ELPAC to be solely led by the parents. In the meantime, we will work with the current parent leaders to support their planning and implementation of the meetings and the development of the by-laws. DESE has announced that they will release additional resources and guidance to support districts with the ELPAC and will create training for parents involved in leadership with the ELPAC. As we continue this work, we will update our community partners and continue to invite them to support this work.

### **Community Partner Quarterly Meetings**

At these meetings we work together on mutual goals that support ELs and their families. The work of the ELPAC has been part of our meeting conversations. Last year we met monthly, but the community partners requested we transition to quarterly meetings for the 19-21 school year. Here are the dates of our meetings:

- Sept. 9 @ Dunkin Administration Building
- Nov. 20 @ Durkin Administration Building
- Jan. 22 @ Durkin Administration Building

(Participants include: ACE, LEI, SEAC, Ascentria, Cultural Exchange through Soccer, Family Service of Central Massachusetts)

### **Virtual Information Sessions for current community partners and other community organizations during school shutdown.**

The goal of these virtual sessions was to provide information to community organizations in order to help our EL families understand, transition and navigate our new "virtual world". We met virtually these dates:

- April 10: WPS website overview and relevant links
- April 23: Remote Learning overview
- May 11: FAQ list in our website, Translations, Clever and Google classroom
- June 9 : Summer program, technology registration, graduation

Participants included: Refugee and Immigrant Assistance Center (RIAC); Worcester Alliance for Refugee Ministry (WARM); ACE; SEAC; Family Services of Central, MA; Cultural Exchange through Soccer (CETS); LEI; Worcester Family Partnership and Greendale Headstart; Worcester Public Library; Dynamy Youth Academy; Ascentria Unaccompanied Minors Program and Training Resources of America.

WPS Chief Diversity Officer, Ivonne Perez, officially assumed her role July 1, 2020 and will continue to be involved in the ELPAC work going forward.

### **ACTION ITEM 6**

6. Review the practice of out of school suspension for students in K-2 grade and work with community partners and internal staff to create an in-school program to provide counselling and assessment services for these students, contingent on proper funding and in-kind services.

#### **ANSWER**

The Administration is currently working on a response to this Action Step to meet the deadline of January 2020.

Update July 2020: The WPS Discipline Committee reviewed out of school suspensions for students in K-2. As a result, funding was provided to hire five mental health clinicians. Three mental health clinicians have been hired to date. One is working at Woodland Academy with the Stabilization Team and one clinician is working with at risk elementary students who will be transitioning to the district Assessment Stabilization Program (ASP).

The special education, SEL and nursing departments are coordinating at Woodland Academy to pilot the Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition (BRYT) Program for Tier 3 students in 2020-2021 through the state nursing grant. BRYT will consult and coach the Woodland staff for implementation of a support room. BRYT positions schools as an essential part of the safety net for students with serious mental health or medical issues. BRYT partners with schools and districts to provide support for a school's priority population by providing tools and a structure that treat and support students for the purpose of returning students to the general education classroom. WPS staff will continue to be trained by Dr. Heather Forkey, UMASS Medical Trauma Center. Training at staff meetings will continue with supported facilitation by building based school adjustment counselors.

The Superintendent and Manager of Social Emotional Learning met in March with Regional and Sectional Directors from the Department of Children and Families to better coordinate work with students and families.

**ACTION ITEM 7**

7. Create an Affirmative Action Advisory Committee that would work with the Human Resource Department and the Chief Diversity Officer. Provide a semiannual report to the School Committee, with the Human Resources Department and the Chief Diversity Officer, as to progress.

ANSWER

The Administration is currently working on a response to this Action Step to meet the deadline of January 2020.

Update July 2020: The Affirmative Action Advisory Committee has not been formed, Due to the hiring responsibility given by law to the superintendent and the principal, the affirmative action committee would have no jurisdiction on hiring.

The goals of the Strategic Plans include achieving increased hiring of diverse staff. The Human Resource Department will report hiring percentages with the Strategic Plan updates.

Update July 2020: The Chief Diversity Officer officially began on July 1, 2020. The Chief Diversity Officer and the Human Resource Department will provide a report to the School Committee on reopening hiring in October 2020.

**ACTION ITEM 8**

8. Create a Superintendents Latino Advisory Committee

ANSWER

The Administration is currently working on a response to this Action Step to meet the deadline of January 2020.

Update July 2020: A Superintendent Latino Advisory Council Committee has been formed. The Superintendent has expanded the council to include additional leaders in the community. The first meeting was March 3, 2020. Current confirmed community members include Junior Belisea, Marcela Uribe-Jennings, Anh Vu Sawyer, Robert Layne, Erik Baptista, Neftali Rivera, Oscar Amparo, Kolawole Akindele and Kwame Yeboah. District and school leaders are Carmen Melendez, Principal Yeu Keu, Ivonne Perez and Susan O'Neil.

**ACTION ITEM 9**

9. Quarterly/biannual reports on the progress of the Strategic Plan

ANSWER

The Superintendent will provide a Report of the Superintendent on Thursday, November 21, 2019.

Update July 2020: The District is partnering with the Rennie Center to provide updates on the Strategic Plan. Reports will be provided to the School Committee on a quarterly basis. Rennie's report was interrupted by the COVID shutdown. A report will be given early in the 2020-2021 school year.

**ACTION ITEM 10**

10. Review and maintain the existing suspension hearing and appeal practices so that the same WPS person is not allowed to do both hearings and appeals. Timeline: Implement immediately

ANSWER

The same person doesn't do the hearing and appeals. The principal does the initial hearing and either the Superintendent or the Director of School Safety does the appeals.

Update July 2020: The Superintendent can have a designee for appeals under 37 H ¾ but not under 37 H or 37 H ½.

**ACTION ITEM 11**

11. Hiring a Chief Diversity Officer who shall report to the Superintendent and who shall work collaboratively with the Department of Human Resources of the Worcester Public Schools

ANSWER

The Administration has hired Ms. Ivonne Perez as the Chief Diversity Officer. She is currently the Principal of Chandler Elementary School. She will report to the Superintendent and will work collaboratively with the Human Resources Office.

Update July 2020: Ms. Perez began her position as of July 1, 2020.

**ACTION ITEM 12**

12. Review and assist a comprehensive plan with college presidents to do focused recruitment and retention plans to hire diverse teachers and support staff.

ANSWER

**Worcester Teacher Pipeline Committee**

The Administration continues to play an active role in the Worcester Teacher Pipeline Committee. This committee includes representatives from higher education institutions, DESE, community groups, business leaders and municipal officials and continues to meet regularly throughout the year. President Barry Maloney of Worcester State University has graciously agreed to host and facilitate the meetings throughout the year. At this point, subcommittees have been formed around the following five areas:

- Recruitment
- Funding & Scholarships
- Mentoring & Retention
- MTEL Preparation & Advising
- Summer Internships & Employment

The Committee met as a whole on August 28th and September 26th and is scheduled to meet again on November 7th, December 5th, January 9th and February 13th. Each subcommittee will conduct additional meetings throughout the year. The Worcester Teacher Pipeline Committee will present its findings in the early spring.

Update July 2020: The Superintendent has attended the Teaching Pipeline Task Force which is chaired by the President of Worcester State University and attended by local college presidents and community representatives. The final meeting of the group was on March 5, 2020. A final report will be provided by President Barry Maloney.

**ACTION ITEM 13**

13. Provide a semi-annual report on the work of the English Language Learner Department and programs to the School Committee on compliance with best practices and Federal DOE guidelines.

Timeline: Fall 2019

**SEMI ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF ENGLISH LEARNERS PROGRAMS, 10/10/19**

The following report provides an update on the work of the English Language Learner Department and related programs in reference to compliance and best practices as guided by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and our current settlement agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice (2016).

**I. COMPLIANCE**

Below are compliance updates on four items aligned to recent DESE guidance: the Home Language Survey, Opt-out procedures, SLIFE students and Benchmark Monitoring.

#### A. Home Language Survey (HLS)

Attached is the new Home Language Survey we adopted from DESE. The changes were in response to feedback the state received from districts around the concern of over testing students for language proficiency.

#### B. Opt-Out Procedures

The following are our new WPS Opt-out procedures:

1. If a parent of an English learner (EL) decides to "opt out" of a language program at the time of enrollment, the school/PIC will place the student in an English language mainstream classroom with an SEI-endorsed teacher and maintain the parent's/guardians opt out notice in the student's file.
2. If a parent of an EL decides to "opt out" while their child is receiving ESL instruction, a meeting will be convened with the ESL teacher, principal and parent/ guardian and with an interpreter to ensure parents/guardians understand their educational rights for ESL instruction and the support available in mainstream education. If the parent/guardian chooses, an "opt out form" will be provided in their preferred language of communication. Forms will be filed in a student's cumulative record.
3. Per new DESE guidelines, starting in the academic year 2019-2020, and every year thereafter, the WPS will provide parents/guardians of an "opt-out" child an opportunity to reconsider ESL instruction annually. A letter will be sent home in the preferred language of communication instructing parents /guardians of the options available. The parent/guardian is asked to return the form or call the school with their decision to either return their child to ESL instruction or keep them in an "opt- out" status. Once the forms are returned, documents will be filed in the student's cumulative file and SAGE is updated.

#### C. SLIFE students: (Students with limited or interrupted formal education)

Last year we started a SLIFE Task Force composed of teachers, coaches, counselors and administrators to review our SLIFE registration and placement protocols. We also hired a district SLIFE coach to work with teachers, students and families to ensure proper identification, placement and monitoring. By the end of 2019-2020 our goal is to have a SLIFE identification assessment composed of a Literacy and Math assessment in the student's native language. This will be in addition to a WPS Protocols and Procedures that will be our guiding document when working with SLIFE students. We are also adding this year a community member to be part of the SLIFE Taskforce.

#### D. Benchmark Monitoring:

The annual ACCESS test has a target that is set for individuals to reach English proficiency in a six-year period. Under the LOOK Act, we are required to monitor the progress of each EL not meeting their ACCESS benchmark. We are calling the monitoring team **LIST** (Language Intervention Support Team). A draft tool has been developed for this year and will be refined based on feedback. The ESL Coaching Team will support principals and their school based teams to respond to the Benchmark Data section of the LOOK Act by implementing the draft Benchmark Monitoring Tool/Student Success Plan and:

- Identify the areas in which identified ELs need improvement and establish personalized goals for attaining English proficiency
- Assess and track the progress of ELs who did not meet benchmarks in the identified areas in need of improvement
- Develop resources to support intervention strategies and progress monitoring
- Incorporate an improved pre-referral protocol that will include culturally and linguistically appropriate processes, observations and assessments with input from the parents or legal guardian of the identified EL
- Offer district-wide PD to support RTI for ELs

## II. BEST PRACTICES:

*A. Identification and support of ELs with identified special needs:* We continue to work with staff on clarifying the difference between English learning needs and specific learning disabilities as categorized in special education.

- Annually, Evaluation Team Chair persons (ETCs), receive updated training from the EL Department on the English Learners identification process, the levels of language acquisition, ESL service delivery, opt-out procedures, and parent program options.
- Each year, every school identifies staff who are trained annually and responsible for reporting out at meetings about the needs of individual EL students. The ESL, special education teacher, and 504 coordinators are typically involved. The purpose is to have a shared understanding about the difference between language acquisition and a learning disability as well as knowledge of current best practices regarding interventions for ELs. PD *Supporting ELs with Disabilities* was offered in the district in October/November 2018. Slides from "Effective Instruction/Assessment for ELWD PD" are attached. Training is scheduled to happen in October and November this year.
- The EL coaches provide support to teachers in regards to scheduling and services for ELSWD. The coaches observe classrooms and model best practices in both general education and special education classrooms.
- WPS has updated the protocols for evaluation and assessment of English Learners. See the attachment.
- WPS has updated the training process and protocols to be used when an interpreter is used during an evaluation. See the attachment.
- A Professional Learning Community (PLC) with Special Education and ESL teachers meets after school, throughout the year, to discuss how to better serve ELs with identified special needs. We will continue these discussions and representation from Child Study will be added to the PLC Team for the 2019-2020 school year. Topics discussed in the PLC have included:
  - Building and sustaining a foundation for learning for all WPS diverse learners Cultivating culturally and linguistically responsive learning environments
  - Intervention and Progress Monitoring Types of interventions/RTI utilized for ELs Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Improvements to the EL Current Performance Template
  - Measuring and Sustaining Student Support Programs Development of a draft Student Success Plan to plan for and monitor struggling ELs.

*B. Staffing Support has continued to increase over the past 3 years:*

- 2019-2020 addition of 12 full time ESL teachers and 6 part-time teachers
- 2019-2020 2 additional ELL coaches have been hired to focus on our secondary schools
- 2019-2020 2 bilingual interventionist added to work with our Dual Language programs
- 2019-2020 Assistant Director has been hired to support compliance implementation, curriculum development and programmatic expansion
- WPS offers an ESL MTEL prep course twice a year to encourage teachers to be dually certified and to support our ESL teachers on waivers

*C. Bilingual Programs:*

- An evaluation of our bilingual programs was conducted in spring 2019 with support from a state grant and the assistance of Patrick Proctor, a Professor from Boston College, whose work and research is based on bilingualism and bilingual programs. (<https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/lynch-school/faculty-research/faculty-directory/c--patrick-proctor.html>) Resources, curriculum and instruction for our bilingual programs were examined. The final report is attached.
- This year we were able to expand our Dual Language (DL) program to the 8th grade at Burncoat Middle School and opened a new Kindergarten class at Woodland Academy. We are applying to the state to offer a High School Dual Language program beginning in 2020-2021.

- This year we are piloting three resources that support biliteracy (e.g., American Reading Company, Benchmark Education Company, and Houghton Mifflin). This pilot is coupled with time spent in curriculum development that mirrors biliteracy standards as well as benchmarks for Spanish language development.
- We have applied for a DESE grant to provide our teachers in the bilingual programs an opportunity to earn their Bilingual Endorsement Certification through an online program from Boston College.

*D. Co-teaching:*

In co-teaching, the ESL teacher and homeroom/content teacher plan and deliver content and language lessons together. Both teachers receive professional development on co-teaching. We have trained 144 teachers in this model. This year we have 23 teaching pairs implementing the co-teaching model. We began with initial training in June 2018 with Honigsfeld and Dove. (See <http://coteachingforells.weebly.com/>)

*E. Parent/Guardian Outreach and Engagement:*

Last year our family outreach served 75 adults in 4 churches. Leveraging the success with reaching Latino families through workshops in local faith based communities, we developed a summer opportunity. WPS offered an intensive 1-week early literacy summer program for Latino families with preschool children. Two churches hosted this workshop series. 36 adults attended. Each family received two bilingual books each session. The books were used in the workshop to teach tips on developing early reading habits. Blanca Figueredo, a bilingual educator from Chandler Magnet School, was the main facilitator. Her background is early literacy development. Please see the attached flyer.

*F. Graduation Improvement efforts and College and Career Readiness:*

- *Summer Program 2019* For the first time we offered a Math SAT program in Spanish for Latinos students delivered by two retired engineering professors from Cuba. We also partnered with the EcoTarium and offered another summer opportunity for high school ELs to receive instruction on academic language and then get an opportunity to volunteer at the EcoTarium. The focus of this partnership was Science and Teaching. We provided financial support for summer programming to: the Latino Educational Institute for the middle school "My Voice, My Community" program; Cultural Exchange through Soccer for a middle and high school "Leadership Development" program; Southeast Asian Coalition for K-12 ESL classes, "Youth Effect" program; and the African Community Education for "Literacy and Youth Development". The following initiatives are slated for this academic year to support our English learners toward high school graduation and dive into their college and career pathways.
- *Dropout prevention interventions: Our coaches will work with high school teams to identify at-risk youths.*
- *Afterschool programming: Writing support and tutoring Goals*  
*Improve students' writing skills by reviewing grammar and writing mechanics Nurture creativity to allow students to express themselves in the form of writing Reinforce ELA and WIDA standards*  
*Program Description Students will participate in an after-school writing club for 30 weeks that will use different formats to engage them in a fun way to support the development of writing skills. Topics will include, but are not limited to, creative writing exercises, poetry and publishing their own book. There will be opportunities to meet local authors who are English learners themselves.*  
*This program will run two days per week at Burncoat and Doherty High Schools from 2:00 – 3:30 (pending planning with schools)*

### **Math support and tutoring Goals**

Support the Math curriculum with fun and interactive ways to learn mathematics of students Close the achievement gap of EL in mathematics Reinforce topics that would support the requirements of Graduation Bring Math skills to the "next level" Develop skills for college and career readiness Program description I. For the month of September, October, January, February, March and April: The main focus will be academic tutoring that would address the specific needs of each student. They will be student-centered remedial activities that could support their success in their math classes. The activities range from individual help, practical activities and small projects. Topics may include, among others, numerical operations, algebra, geometry and probability. II .For the months of November, December, May and June: The main focus will be to run a math club with different emphases / themes to reinforce math concepts and open students' interest in exploring math beyond the "classroom walls" in a way that is engaging, interactive and FUN! 2: 00-3: 30 4 days a week for October, January, February, March, April 2: 00-3: 00 5 times a week for November, December, May June Both South High and North High will have the same programming.

### **College and Career Readiness activities for (Spring) 2019-2020:**

- Multilingual professionals speaker series in ESL classrooms\
- Local college admission counselors lunch series with ELs
- College tours for ELs
- Explore more opportunities for Advanced Placement and Early College Experience
- Parent workshops on college and career readiness

### **III. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:**

#### *A .Culturally Responsive Teaching*

There are various initiatives the ELL Department launched last year in efforts to expand educators' competency in culturally responsive teaching.

1. **RealTALK!** In 2018-2019, this was an "after-hour" PLC for school leaders and teachers around topics of diversity, equity, race, workforce landscape and teaching diverse learners. We met for 2 hours in each of the three meetings (10/29/18. 12/10/18 and 2/5/19)
2. **A Book study on "Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain" by Zaretta Hammond.** 40 participants completed the online book study via Google Classroom. Participants were responsible for responding to posts from at least 2 other participants on each assignment. As a final product, participants wrote a paper that included: a. something they saw transform as a result of learning and thinking about Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) and b. identifying an area where they see they could learn more and grow regarding CRT. Two of the participants who are principals, have planned to do this book study with their staff in 2019-2020. The Digital Learning Department is also running this book study. We will hold another district-wide book study again starting October 25, 2019.
3. **A 3 day module with Assabet Valley Collaborative.** 25 participants trained between August and October 11th. The target audience was Assistant principals from middle and high schools. Main themes were:
  - Self-exploration on blind spots and biases
  - Deepen viewpoints & experiences related to identity, diversity, achievement, & learning;
  - Increase understanding of the history of educational inequity in the U.S,
  - Develop a lens for detecting and disrupting bias in school climate, practices and policies through the principles, elements and tools of the cultural proficiency continuum;
  - Develop skills to intervene and advance the thinking/learning of others through practice;
  - Develop an action plan for next steps in your life and work.

**4. Community Immersion PD.** 19 WPS educators participated in a June professional development that focused on learning about families and the community in the Woodland/Claremont area by going out and exploring the community and visiting families in their homes. This Community Immersion PD was designed for engagement beyond our school walls - scavenger hunt style. Participants walked the streets of a Worcester Public School neighborhood with the goal of seeing the world through the eyes of our students' and families'. As part of the exploration, participants experienced shopping for food, visiting a place of worship, navigating public transportation and visiting within a student's home. There was a debrief before and after the scavenger hunt. We are hoping to be able to duplicate this PD with another school this year.

*B . Instructional Practices:*

1. Please see attached for 2018-2019 summary of EL related PD.
2. Based on classroom observations and feedback we decided to hone in on *Student Talk* as a major focus for PD for teachers. The various PD will be available for all ESL teachers, Content-Area teachers and administrators. An example of that PD involves the book that all principals and ESL teachers received in August, **Content- Area Conversations** by Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey and Carol Rothenberg. In addition, we will do a book study on **Academic Conversations: Classroom Talk That Fosters Critical Thinking and Content Understanding**, by Jeff Zwiers and Marie Crawford.
3. Another exciting PD is based on the book **Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning**, by Pauline Gibbons. This particular PD is run by Lesley University Professor and Linguistic expert, Dr. Laura Schall-Leckrone (<https://lesley.edu/about/faculty-staff-directory/laura-schall-leckrone>) and provides strategies to develop oral language skills as a platform for literacy development for ESL and content teachers. Imbedded in this PD are 4 sessions for coaching opportunities with the participants as well as working with our ESL coaches. 3. In 2019-2020, WPS ESL staff will deliver PD for teachers of students with special needs using the following resources, "**RTI with English Learners**", by Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey and Carol Rothenberg, and "**Seven Steps to Separating Difference from Disability**", by Catherin Collier. 4. ESL staff gave and reviewed with ESL teachers and principals this past August the document
4. "**The GO TO Strategies: Scaffolding Options for Teachers of English Language Learners, K-12**", by Linda New Levine, Laura Lukens, and Betty Ansin Smallwood. Department staff will lead a more paused and in depth PD on this resource for teachers and administrators during the school year.
5. Other Titles of PD lined up for 2019-2020 include but not limited to:
  - Academic Conversation-book study
  - Supporting ELs with Disabilities
  - Co-teaching Part II
  - Gradual Release for all learners
  - Pathway to dual/ESL licensure
  - Exploring the ESL MTEL exam
  - Educational and Assessment Considerations for ELs (Intersection) PLC
  - Google hacks to manage and organize your professional work
  - How to support/coach ESL and SEI teachers
  - Inside Textbook Review- Diving deeper
  - EL strategies to use in Science with Lesson Study (ESL/content WIDA)
  - New ESL Teacher Support (Elementary)
  - Creating a Community Immersion PD Scavenger Hunt Style at Your School
  - Revisiting Language Objectives
  - SMART card for Administrators
  - Supporting English learners for fluid and fluent writing (focus on SRSD)
  - Understanding the data around ELs and how to navigate the data to inform change
  - Using technology to develop oracy and literacy i English Learners
  - Effective strategies when working with newcomers students

- GO TO SEI Strategies-Hands on PD that brings SEI strategies to live
  - Supporting ELs in Sub-Separate Settings
  - Intersection Training between ESL and Sped-Part II
6. Monday, October 28, 2019, 5:00 to 7:00 pm. Linda Nathan, founder and headmaster of the Boston Arts Academy, Boston's first and only public high school for the visual and performing arts, educational author and researcher, will share her research and facilitate conversation about ways to address roadblocks to our students' post- secondary success. A book signing will follow of her latest publication, "When Grit Isn't Enough: A High School Principal Examines Poverty and Inequality and the College for All Promise". The Worcester Public Schools is co-sponsoring this event with the Latino Education Institute at Worcester State University.
  7. During the 2019-2020 school year, schools in the secondary network will be working with consultant Giselle Martin on culturally responsive pedagogy. Dr. Gisiele Martin- Kniep, CEO of Learner-Centered Initiatives, began her work with the district on October 10, 2019. Dr. Martin-Kniep work is targeted with middle and high school staff and district leaders on a culturally responsive curriculum. She has extensive experience in this area and has trained the New York City schools previously on a culturally responsive curriculum.
  8. "Leadership for Equity and Access", a full day workshop with Irvin Leon Scott, Senior Lecturer on Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education, will be held Thursday, August 20, 2020 for district principals and management. The related summer book study is being determined. (<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/faculty/irvin-scott>)

#### **ACTION ITEM 14**

14. Work with the School Committee to consider and implement recommendations of the Mayor's Commission where appropriate. Work with the Commission to benchmark projects.

#### **ANSWER**

The report was released on Monday, October 28, 2019 and feedback was gathered in a meeting on the same day. The final report will be issued at a later date.



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