

## **Agenda School Committee Meeting 10.14.25**

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Gardner Public School System is to prepare, in collaboration with parents, students who are ready upon graduation for the challenges of college and career without remediation. This will be done in a safe, caring, just and equitable environment. Our Core Values are Academic Excellence, Creativity, Respect and Responsibility.

**Notice:** The listing of agenda items are those reasonably anticipated by the Chairman which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.

Any person may make a video or audio recording of an open session of a meeting, or may transmit the meeting through any medium, subject to reasonable requirements of the Chair as to the number, placement, and operation of equipment used so as not to interfere with the conduct of the meeting. Any person intending to make such recording shall notify the Chair forthwith. All documents and exhibits used or referenced at the meeting must be submitted in duplicate to the Recording Secretary, as they become part of the meeting minutes.

## **GARDNER PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

### **REGULAR MEETING OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, October 14, 2025, 6:00 PM**

**City Council Chambers, City Hall, Gardner, MA 01440**

### **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

- A. **Call to Order**
- B. **Open Time for General Public –**
- C. **Recognitions by the Superintendent –**  
**GHS Seniors - Aiden Lospennato & Natalie Ruiz**
- D. **Consent Agenda**
  - a. **Approval of Minutes: September 8, 2025**
    - Warrant # 26-10, dated September 4, 2025, in the amount of \$504,988.41
    - Warrant # 26-11, dated September 11, 2025, in the amount of \$470,112.04
    - Warrant # 26-12, dated September 18, 2025, in the amount of \$153,463.04
    - Warrant # 26-13, dated September 25, 2025, in the amount of \$288,178.13
    - Warrant # 26-14, dated October 2, 2025, in the amount of \$396,564.27
    - **Donations –**
      - GHS Music Program was gifted \$16,000.00. Established in Steve Ciccolini memory to keep music alive. Music & Education Fund to be split between GHS, GMS, & GES.

**RECEIVED**  
2025 OCT - 7 A 11: 35  
CITY CLERK'S OFFICE  
GARDNER, MA

## **Agenda School Committee Meeting 10.14.25**

- E.     **Subcommittee Report**  
Policy Subcommittee
- F.     **Student Advisory Board** - Aiden Lospennato & Natalie Ruiz
- G.     **Discussion Items:**  
New Business  
Item #3722 **First Reading of Policies (Information)**  
DB – Annual Budget  
DBG – Budget Adoption Procedures  
EFD – School Nutrition Program Charge Policy  
JIC – Student Discipline  
  
Item #3723 **Superintendent Goals (Vote Required)**  
Item #3724 **District Improvement Plan (Vote Required)**  
Item #3725 **Curriculum Coordinator Update (Information)**  
Item# 3726 **Director of Multilingual Learners (Information)**  
Item #3727 **Grants Administrator Update (Information)**  
Item #3728 **Special Education Update (Information)**
- H.     **Communications**
- I.     **Final Comments of School Committee**
- J.     **Executive Session**
- K.     **Next Meeting:**  
Meeting date for the future S.C. meetings;  
Monday, November 10, 2025 @6:00PM
- L.     **Adjournment**

**GARDNER PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**BRIEFING**

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, October 14, 2025, 6:00 PM  
City Council Chambers, City Hall, Gardner, MA 01440

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Policy Subcommittee
- F. Student Advisory Board – Aiden Lospennato & Natalie Ruiz**
- G. Discussion Items:**
  - New Business**
    - Item #3722 First Reading of Policies (Information)**
      - DB** – Annual Budget
      - DBG** – Budget Adoption Procedures
      - EFD** – School Nutrition Program Charge Policy
      - JIC** – Student Discipline
    - Item #3723 Superintendent Goals (Vote Required)**
    - Item #3724 District Improvement Plan (Vote Required)**
    - Item #3725 Curriculum Coordinator Update (Information)**
    - Item# 3726 Director of Multilingual Learners (Information)**
    - Item #3727 Grants Administrator Update (Information)**
    - Item #3728 Special Education Update (Information)**

**Briefing**  
**School Committee Meeting 10.14.2025**

- H.     Communication**
- I.     Final Comments of School Committee**
- J.     Executive Session**
- K.     Next Meeting:**  
**Meeting date for next School Committee meeting;**  
Monday, November 1, 2025 @6:00PM
- L.     Adjournment**

# **Gardner School Committee**

**City Council Chambers, 95 Pleasant Street, Gardner, Massachusetts**

## **Regular Meeting – September 8, 2025**

Members present: Mayor Michael Nicholson  
Rachel Cormier  
Anne Hurst  
John LaFreniere  
Jennifer Pelavin  
Robert Swartz  
Shannon Ward-Leighton (arrived at 6:30pm)

School Personnel Present: Dr. Mark Pellegrino, Superintendent  
Brenda Smith, Recording Secretary  
Dr. Catherine Goguen, Chief Academic Officer  
Joyce West, Director of Pupil Personnel Service

### **Call to Order**

Mayor Nicholson, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6.00pm. The meeting opened with a roll call and the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was broadcast live on Channel 8 (Gardner Educational Television Station).

### **Open Time for the General Public**

Mr. Zach Marquis was introduced; I have been running our Gardner Public Schools Before & Afterschool program along with the Summer Rec program for the past 4 years. Over the years we grew so much. I started out with 20-30 students and now have about 100 attending the program. We serve all three schools now, K-4<sup>th</sup> flag ship program 5 & 6<sup>th</sup> program that volunteer in our program. We use 60-70% of our students as staff from our high school. It has been a huge resource for the families in the community.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

**Mr. LaFreniere moved to accept the Consent Agenda as presented:**

- **Acceptance of Minutes, June 9, 2025**
- **Ratification of the following Warrants as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee:**
  - Warrant # 25-49, dated June 05, 2025, in the amount of \$366,616.97
  - Warrant # 25-50, dated June 12, 2025, in the amount of \$298,211.93
  - Warrant # 25-51, dated June 18, 2025, in the amount of \$356,021.50
  - Warrant # 25-52, dated June 26, 2025, in the amount of \$617,210.04
  - Warrant # 25-53, dated June 30, 2025, in the amount of \$611,441.28
  - Warrant # 25-54, dated June 30, 2025, in the amount of \$186,263.14
  - Warrant # 25-55, dated June 30, 2025, in the amount of \$166,803.71
  - Warrant # 26-04, dated July 24, 2025, in the amount of \$60,250.29
  - Warrant # 26-05, dated July 31, 2025, in the amount of \$53,448.91

- Warrant # 26-06, dated August 07, 2025, in the amount of \$137,127.87
- Warrant # 26-07, dated August 14, 2025, in the amount of \$239,629.05
- Warrant # 26-08, dated August 21, 2025, in the amount of \$202,513.38
- Warrant # 26-09, dated August 28, 2025, in the amount of \$270,967.76
- Donations –
  - Jason & Alyssa Zelesky donated \$500.00 to GHS towards Athletic Banquet on 5.12.25

**Seconded by Mrs. Pelavin**

**Vote - so voted.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

### **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### **Facilities Subcommittee**

Mr. Swartz, Chairperson, reported that the Facilities Subcommittee met on September 2, 2025. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

Mr. Hawk announced the MSBA acceptance and approval for a new metal roof at the Middle School, which will be installed in 2026.

Mr. Anderson briefed the committee about the projects that were completed during summer break.

Mr. Hawke presented a complete list of summer projects for all the school buildings, grounds and for the District. Completed and still in process items and those items scheduled or to be scheduled were listed.

#### **Finance Subcommittee**

Mr. LaFreniere, Chairperson, reported that the Finance Subcommittee met on September 2, 2025. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

Mr. Hawke provided the final FY 25 expense report. The report showed the school department spent 99% of the allotted budget. The remaining funds were used to offset expenses in revolving funds.

Opening day was discussed there were every year occurrences that happen with new students and/or new buildings. The new GMS pick-up and drop-off route was discussed.

A \$500.00 donation was received for the GHS Athletic Banquet and accepted by the committee.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Item #3714 – Second Reading of Policies**

**Mrs. Hurst presented the following policies for a second read as recommended by the Policy Subcommittee:**

**BGF Suspension of Policies**

**BIA New Member Orientation**

**CA Administrative Goals**

**CB School Superintendent**

**CBI Evaluation Superintendent**

**CEA Recruitment of Superintendent**

**JICH Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Use by Students Prohibited**

**Seconded by Ms. Cormier.**

**Vote - so voted.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

**Item #3715 – AFSCME Contract 2025-2028 with Revisions**

**Mrs. Pelavin moved that the District School Committee vote to ratify the contract with Revisions between the Gardner School Committee and the AFSCME Union for the period July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2028**

**Seconded by Mrs. Hurst**

**Vote -so voted.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

**Item #3716 – MASC Delegate**

**Mrs. Pelavin moved that the District School Committee vote to appoint Robert Swartz to represent the Gardner School Committee at the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) in November 2025.**

**Seconded by Mrs. Cormier.**

**Vote - so voted.**

**Mrs. Cormier abstained from voting.**

**Item #3717 – Superintendent Goals**

**Dr. Pellegrino presented his goals for FY26. All these Goals align with the District Improvement Plan.**

- Fully implement IEP accommodations matrix in CPTs across the district.
- 80% of core academic classrooms will have engaging classroom lessons
- Reduce academic equity gaps for students who are Multilingual Learners or have Special Needs
- Students in Grades K-4 will be Reading on Grade level
- Participate in Lynch Leadership Academy District-level Supervisory Program

**Item #3718 – District Improvement Plan**

**Dr. Goguen presented the Gardner Public Schools District Improvement Plan for 2024-2027.**

**Mission - Gardner Public Schools will work side by side with our families to prepare students for their future success in college, career, and community endeavors. This will be done in a safe, caring, just and equitable environment. The Core Values are - Community, Appreciation, Responsibility and Excellence-**

The Plan presented the Strategic Objectives with Action Steps. The Implementation Timeline and Outcomes by 2027 are also included with four highlighted areas added for the 2025-2026 school year. The Plan is updated every three years and will be voted on at the next School Committee meeting. The District Improvement Plan is included in this packet.

**Item #3719 – Curriculum Coordinator’s Update**

The Curriculum Coordinator’s Report was included in the members’ packets. Dr. Goguen, Chief Academic Officer, was present this evening.

**Item #3720 - Grants Administrator's Update**

The Grants & Communications Update was included in members' packets. Mrs. Dunn, Grants & Communications Manager, was not present this evening.

**Item #3721 - Special Education Update**

The Special Education Update Report was included in members’ packets. Ms. Joyce West, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, was present this evening.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Dr. Pellegrino thanked Zach Marquis for talking about the before and after school program that the City offers. He also wanted to thank Brandon Huey for starting a new program, “Gardner Community Youth Center”. We are very excited this program is up and running this year for grades 7-12.

Our Opening of school, Welcome Evenings were absolutely phenomenal. The attendance was well attended and families enjoyed them very much. A great way to open the school year. Bus issues went very well for our opening days.

**FINAL COMMENTS**

Mrs. Cormier thanked everyone involved for the great start of school everything went very well. She heard no negative comments and hope it continues that way throughout the year. She’s excited to report this is the start of the last year of her having a child in GPS so you’ll hear all the senior stories all year.

Mr. LaFreniere welcomed back everyone and agreed with Mrs. Cormier, usually this time of year I’m getting emails and phone calls with issues. This is the second year in a row, last year minimal and this year I have received nothing.

Mr. Swartz attended a meeting this afternoon and learned the City is making a change to the Senior Center location and wanted the committee to know that the center will be relocating to Waterford Street School sometime this coming spring.

I wanted to share there was a MASC email that went out and I’d hope you would all read it.



Mrs. Pelavin shared she was able to attend the welcome back event as well. I was pleasantly surprised how many parents & kids attended. I think it's a great thing we are doing. I also heard the GMS new Principal's welcoming went well and was well attended. All the planning going into place is really helping and showing, thank you.

Mrs. Hurst welcomed back everyone and is also hoping for a great school year. September is National Suicide month please reach out to love ones and friends to break the silence it will make a big difference.

Mrs. Ward-Leighton apologized for her late arrival I will need to make a note on my calendar of the time change. Welcome back everyone and I also received good vibes all around.

Mayor Nicholson agreed with Mrs. Ward-Leighton he was reminded of the time change of tonight's meeting five minutes before the meeting start time of 6:00pm.

I was able to attend the first day of schools walk through with Dr. Pellegrino welcoming the students all back, the high fives were great. Welcome back to all staff & students.

Mayor Nicholson welcomed Brenda Smith to the committee and for being here today as the new recording secretary taking over from our retiring secretary, Terri Hillman.

- The Mayor wanted to share a few City side things happening so the public will be aware of them. The new Gardner Community Youth Center is open for grades 7-12<sup>th</sup> for students to attend for free because of a grant received through the city. Hours are from 2-6:00pm on school days and 10-6:00pm on half days. You can see a Virtual tour of the Center on the City YouTube page.
- A Municipal paving grant received will allow for Pearl Street to Betty Spring Rd. to the uptown rotary to be paved and replace sidewalks. This will be completed this fall.
- Planning ahead, a few projects will take place at City Hall, the front steps will be completely removed and redone. The front entrance will be closed and there will be signage directing you how to access the building. You can still do drop offs in the drop box. The ADA ramp will also be redone. This will be an eight-week process. This work will be taking place this October –December.

The Next meeting will take place on Tuesday, October 14, due to the Monday holiday.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Mrs. Pelavin moved to adjourn.**

**Seconded by Mr. Swartz.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

**Vote – so voted.**

**Regular Meeting**

**September 8, 2025  
Page 6**

The meeting adjourned at 6:42pm.

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**Anne Hurst, Secretary**

B. Smith, Recording Secretary

**GARDNER PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SYNOPSIS OF WARRANT**

**WARRANT #: 26-10**

**WARRANT DATE** 09/04/25

| Location                  | Office / General /<br>Custodial Supplies | Curriculum        | Nurse         | IT                | Athletics     | Field Trips   | Facilities         | Utilities     | TOTAL               |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| High School               |                                          | \$2,779.77        |               | \$2,760.22        |               |               | \$30,507.24        |               | \$36,047.23         |
| Middle School             |                                          |                   |               | \$1,443.03        |               |               | \$23,968.40        |               | \$25,411.43         |
| Gardner Elementary School |                                          | \$367.84          |               | \$2,722.32        |               |               | \$41,334.41        |               | \$44,424.57         |
| GALT                      |                                          |                   |               |                   |               |               | \$3,203.59         |               | \$3,203.59          |
| <b>Sub-Total</b>          | <b>\$0.00</b>                            | <b>\$3,147.61</b> | <b>\$0.00</b> | <b>\$6,925.57</b> | <b>\$0.00</b> | <b>\$0.00</b> | <b>\$99,013.64</b> | <b>\$0.00</b> | <b>\$109,086.82</b> |

| Location          | Office Supplies | Curriculum      | Assessment        | IT                 | Prof. Dev.        | Tuition            | Prof. Serv        | Facilities        | Carryover          | Legal             | Dues         | TOTAL               |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Special Education | \$881.88        | \$717.30        | \$3,450.00        | \$992.07           |                   | \$67,063.86        | \$1,459.45        |                   |                    | \$5,856.00        |              | \$204,313.51        |
| Administration    | \$21.20         |                 |                   | \$47,245.26        | \$4,100.00        |                    |                   | \$3,203.59        | \$65,097.90        |                   | #####        | \$123,892.95        |
| <b>Sub-Total</b>  | <b>\$903.08</b> | <b>\$717.30</b> | <b>\$3,450.00</b> | <b>\$48,237.33</b> | <b>\$4,100.00</b> | <b>\$67,063.86</b> | <b>\$1,459.45</b> | <b>\$3,203.59</b> | <b>\$65,097.90</b> | <b>\$5,856.00</b> | <b>#####</b> | <b>\$204,313.51</b> |

|                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Revolving             | \$378.00            |
| Grants                | \$128,173.39        |
| Building Improvements | \$1,458.00          |
| GHS Auditorium        | \$61,578.69         |
|                       |                     |
| <b>Sub-Total</b>      | <b>\$191,588.08</b> |

|                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| <b>GRAND TOTAL</b> | <b>\$504,988.41</b> |
|--------------------|---------------------|

**GARDNER PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SYNOPSIS OF WARRANT**

**WARRANT #: 26-11**

**WARRANT DAT** 09/11/25

| Location                  | Office / General /<br>Custodial Supplies | Curriculum        | Prof. Dev       | IT                | Athletics       | Dues            | Facilities      | Utilities         | TOTAL              |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| High School               |                                          | \$4,212.69        |                 | \$2,460.00        | \$746.54        | \$120.00        | \$104.36        | \$ 1,483.12       | \$9,126.71         |
| Middle School             | -\$154.35                                |                   |                 |                   |                 |                 |                 | \$ 653.43         | \$499.08           |
| Gardner Elementary School | \$1,025.00                               | \$3,808.56        | \$216.72        |                   |                 |                 | \$111.94        |                   | \$5,162.22         |
| GALT                      |                                          |                   |                 |                   |                 |                 |                 | \$ 102.71         | \$102.71           |
| <b>Sub-Total</b>          | <b>\$870.65</b>                          | <b>\$8,021.25</b> | <b>\$216.72</b> | <b>\$2,460.00</b> | <b>\$746.54</b> | <b>\$120.00</b> | <b>\$216.30</b> | <b>\$2,239.26</b> | <b>\$14,890.72</b> |

| Location          | Utilities       | Transportation     | Prof. Services      | IT                | Prof. Dev.      | Insurance         | Assessments       | Facilities     | Carryover          | Dues & Mem        | TOTAL               |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Special Education |                 | \$23,520.00        | \$230,269.70        |                   |                 |                   | \$4,423.84        |                |                    |                   | \$258,213.54        |
| Administration    | \$102.70        |                    |                     | \$2,900.70        | \$203.00        | \$1,120.00        |                   | \$43.18        | \$30,044.97        |                   | \$34,414.55         |
| <b>Sub-Total</b>  | <b>\$102.70</b> | <b>\$23,520.00</b> | <b>\$230,269.70</b> | <b>\$2,900.70</b> | <b>\$203.00</b> | <b>\$1,120.00</b> | <b>\$4,423.84</b> | <b>\$43.18</b> | <b>\$30,044.97</b> | <b>\$6,280.00</b> | <b>\$298,908.09</b> |

|                  |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Revolving        | \$15,614.80         |
| Grants           | \$11,760.00         |
| GHS Auditorium   | \$128,938.43        |
|                  |                     |
|                  |                     |
| <b>Sub-Total</b> | <b>\$156,313.23</b> |

|                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| <b>GRAND TOTAL</b> | <b>\$470,112.04</b> |
|--------------------|---------------------|

**GARDNER PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SYNOPSIS OF WARRANT**

**WARRANT #: 26-12**

**WARRANT DAT**    09/18/25

| Location                  | Office / General /<br>Custodial Supplies | Curriculum        | MTSS/PBIS         | Nurse           | Athletics         | Dues          | Facilities         | Utilities         | TOTAL              |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| High School               |                                          | \$1,089.00        |                   |                 | \$2,781.99        |               | \$1,611.32         | \$ 229.55         | \$5,711.86         |
| Middle School             |                                          | \$735.27          | \$2,087.00        |                 |                   |               | \$1,829.23         | \$ 1,831.79       | \$6,483.29         |
| Gardner Elementary School | \$250.20                                 | \$6,143.89        |                   | \$812.69        |                   |               | \$6,335.05         | \$ 1,099.48       | \$14,641.31        |
| GALT                      | \$401.43                                 |                   |                   |                 |                   |               | \$711.72           |                   | \$1,113.15         |
| <b>Sub-Total</b>          | <b>\$651.63</b>                          | <b>\$7,968.16</b> | <b>\$2,087.00</b> | <b>\$812.69</b> | <b>\$2,781.99</b> | <b>\$0.00</b> | <b>\$10,487.32</b> | <b>\$3,160.82</b> | <b>\$27,949.61</b> |

| Location          | Office / Custodial<br>Supplies | Transportation | Prof. Services | IT                 | Tuition           | Curriculum        | Utilities       | Facilities        | Carryover          | TOTAL              |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Special Education |                                |                |                |                    | \$3,425.10        | \$5,498.20        |                 |                   |                    | \$8,923.30         |
| Administration    | \$6.40                         |                |                | \$48,914.57        |                   | \$748.75          | \$441.00        | \$2,822.73        | \$13,352.82        | \$66,286.27        |
| <b>Sub-Total</b>  | <b>\$6.40</b>                  | <b>\$0.00</b>  | <b>\$0.00</b>  | <b>\$48,914.57</b> | <b>\$3,425.10</b> | <b>\$6,246.95</b> | <b>\$441.00</b> | <b>\$2,822.73</b> | <b>\$13,352.82</b> | <b>\$75,209.57</b> |

|                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| Revolving        | \$3,066.55         |
| Grants           | \$47,237.31        |
| GHS Auditorium   |                    |
|                  |                    |
|                  |                    |
| <b>Sub-Total</b> | <b>\$50,303.86</b> |

|                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| <b>GRAND TOTAL</b> | <b>\$153,463.04</b> |
|--------------------|---------------------|

**GARDNER PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SYNOPSIS OF WARRANT**

**WARRANT #: 26-13**

**WARRANT DAT** 09/25/25

| Location                  | Office / General /<br>Custodial Supplies | Curriculum         | Prof. Dev     | IT                | Athletics     | Nurse           | Facilities        | Utilities     | TOTAL              |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| High School               | \$1,343.72                               | \$11,058.92        |               |                   |               |                 | \$2,374.97        |               | \$14,777.61        |
| Middle School             |                                          | \$20,072.49        |               | \$3,071.86        |               | \$556.21        | \$4,676.88        |               | \$28,377.44        |
| Gardner Elementary School |                                          |                    |               |                   |               |                 |                   |               | \$0.00             |
| GALT                      |                                          |                    |               |                   |               |                 |                   |               | \$0.00             |
| <b>Sub-Total</b>          | <b>\$1,343.72</b>                        | <b>\$31,131.41</b> | <b>\$0.00</b> | <b>\$3,071.86</b> | <b>\$0.00</b> | <b>\$556.21</b> | <b>\$7,051.85</b> | <b>\$0.00</b> | <b>\$43,155.05</b> |

| Location          | General Supplies  | Transportation    | Prof. Services    | IT                 | Prof. Dev.      | Tuition            | Legal             | Facilities    | Carryover         | Dues & Mem         | TOTAL               |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Special Education |                   | \$4,599.00        | \$4,659.95        |                    |                 | \$56,026.08        |                   |               |                   | \$11,003.00        | \$76,288.03         |
| Administration    | \$4,844.03        |                   |                   | \$31,221.45        | \$300.00        |                    | \$1,560.00        |               | \$3,562.50        |                    | \$41,487.98         |
| <b>Sub-Total</b>  | <b>\$4,844.03</b> | <b>\$4,599.00</b> | <b>\$4,659.95</b> | <b>\$31,221.45</b> | <b>\$300.00</b> | <b>\$56,026.08</b> | <b>\$1,560.00</b> | <b>\$0.00</b> | <b>\$3,562.50</b> | <b>\$11,003.00</b> | <b>\$117,776.01</b> |

|                  |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Revolving        | \$95,763.77         |
| Grants           | \$27,733.30         |
| GMS Roof         | \$3,750.00          |
|                  |                     |
|                  |                     |
| <b>Sub-Total</b> | <b>\$127,247.07</b> |

|                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| <b>GRAND TOTAL</b> | <b>\$288,178.13</b> |
|--------------------|---------------------|

**GARDNER PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SYNOPSIS OF WARRANT**

**WARRANT #: 26-14**

**WARRANT DAT**    10/02/25

| Location                  | Office / General /<br>Custodial Supplies | Curriculum        | Prof. Dev       | IT                | Student field trip | Prof. Ser         | Facilities          | Utilities         | TOTAL        |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| High School               | \$34.63                                  | \$389.97          | \$295.00        | \$2,701.22        | \$1,000.00         |                   | \$32,762.62         |                   | \$37,183.44  |
| Middle School             |                                          | \$99.00           |                 | \$1,443.03        |                    | \$5,676.25        | \$23,802.98         |                   | \$31,021.26  |
| Gardner Elementary School |                                          | \$1,227.23        |                 | \$2,722.32        |                    |                   | \$41,075.06         | \$ 2,767.76       | \$47,792.37  |
| GALT                      |                                          |                   |                 |                   |                    |                   | \$3,072.88          |                   | \$3,072.88   |
| <b>Sub-Total</b>          | <b>\$34.63</b>                           | <b>\$1,716.20</b> | <b>\$295.00</b> | <b>\$6,866.57</b> | <b>\$1,000.00</b>  | <b>\$5,676.25</b> | <b>\$100,713.54</b> | <b>\$2,767.76</b> | <b>#####</b> |

| Location          | General Supplies | Transportation    | Prof. Services    | IT                 | Assessment         | Tuition      | Legal             | Facilities        | Carryover          | TOTAL               |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Special Education |                  | \$2,044.25        | \$2,500.00        | \$992.07           | \$11,273.33        | #####        | \$3,768.00        |                   |                    | \$155,813.83        |
| Administration    | \$21.20          |                   |                   | \$27,144.03        |                    |              |                   | \$3,072.88        | \$51,913.27        | \$82,151.38         |
| <b>Sub-Total</b>  | <b>\$21.20</b>   | <b>\$2,044.25</b> | <b>\$2,500.00</b> | <b>\$28,136.10</b> | <b>\$11,273.33</b> | <b>#####</b> | <b>\$3,768.00</b> | <b>\$3,072.88</b> | <b>\$51,913.27</b> | <b>\$237,965.21</b> |

|                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| Revolving        | \$3,089.68         |
| Grants           | \$36,439.43        |
| GMS Roof         |                    |
|                  |                    |
|                  |                    |
| <b>Sub-Total</b> | <b>\$39,529.11</b> |

|                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| <b>GRAND TOTAL</b> | <b>\$396,564.27</b> |
|--------------------|---------------------|

## **GPS Music Donation**

The Gardner Public Schools Music Program was gifted \$16,000 from the Steve Ciccolini Music & Education Fund to be split between the elementary, middle, and high school. Steve was a local musician from Leominster who passed away in 2021, and this fund was established in his memory to keep music alive with the younger generations in the Central Massachusetts area. Over the past few years this fund has been able to award over \$104,000 to local area school and community music programs, and we are extremely grateful to be one of this year's recipients. The use of the funds for each school is outlined below.

GES - New Clarinet, Instrument Storage System, & Festival Fee for Great East  
GMS - New Bari Sax, Sound Equipment, and Piano Keyboard Stands  
GHS - New Bari Sax



# **GARDNER PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Policy  
Subcommittee  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, September 17, 2025  
4:30 PM  
Professional Development Room  
160 Elm Street, Gardner, MA  
01440

In Attendance: Mrs. Anne Hurst, Chair; Mrs. Rachel Cormier, Member; Ms. Shannon Ward, Member

Absent:

Also in Attendance: Dr. Catherine Goguen, Chief Academic Officer; Ms. Courtney Dunn, Director of Grants and Communication; Ms. Joyce West, Director of Pupil Personnel Services

Mrs. Hurst called the meeting to order at 4:33 p.m.

A motion was made by Mrs. Cormier and seconded by Ms. Ward to approve the minutes of the May 15, 2025 Policy Meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

The following policies were reviewed and it was determined that no changes were required. Therefore, the policies will be updated as "Reviewed September 2025":

- CM – School District Annual Report
- DA – Fiscal Management Goals
- DJA – Purchasing Authority
- DKC – Expenses/Expense Reimbursements
- EBC – Emergency Plans
- JEB – Entrance Age
- JJA – Student Organizations

Policy CBD – Superintendent Contract was tabled to the October Subcommittee Meeting for further review and discussion.

Policy DB – Annual Budget was reviewed and discussed. Dr. Goguen reported that Mr. Hawke, Director of Finance Operations, recommends using the language in the updated Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) Policy DB to replace the District's current policy language. Mr. Hawke stated that the MASC language better describes the process. A motion was made by Mrs. Cormier and seconded by Ms. Ward to send the policy with the recommended changes to the October full School Committee

Meeting for a first read. The motion passed unanimously.

Policy DBG – Budget Adoption Procedures was reviewed and discussed. Dr. Goguen presented changes as recommended by Mr. Hawke that combined updated MASC model Policy DBG language with the District’s current language for regulation compliance. A motion was made by Ms. Ward and seconded by Mrs. Cormier to send the policy with recommended changes to the October full School Committee Meeting for a first read. The motion passed unanimously.

Policy EFD – School Nutrition Program Charge Policy was reviewed and discussed. Dr. Goguen stated that Mr. Hawke recommends using the updated MASC model Policy EFD in its entirety to replace the District current policy. The MASC model policy reflects the current regulations for free meals to all students. A motion was made by Ms. Ward and seconded by Mrs. Cormier to send the policy with the recommended changes to the October full School Committee Meeting for a first read. The motion passed unanimously.

Policy JIC – Student Discipline was reviewed and discussed. Ms. West presented changes to the order of the sections within the policy for better clarity. A motion was made by Mrs. Cormier and seconded by Ms. Ward to send the policy with the recommended changes to the October full School Committee Meeting for a first read. The motion passed unanimously.

The next Policy Subcommittee meetings will occur in the Central Office Professional Development Room as follows:

- Wednesday, October 15, 2025 at 4:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, November 19, 2025 at 4:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, December 17, 2025 at 4:30 p.m.

A motion was made by Mrs. Cormier and seconded by Ms. Ward to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

## ANNUAL BUDGET

The annual budget is the financial expression of the goals of the School Committee in meeting the needs of all students.

The budget then requires an orderly and cooperative effort by the Committee, the staff, and the community to achieve the goals of the district.

Public school budgeting is regulated and controlled by legislation, state regulations, and local School Committee policy. The operating budget for the school district will be prepared and managed in line with the above.

In developing a budget, care shall be taken to make all presentations and documents associated with the budget clear and accessible to the members of the School Committee, to the municipal officials, and to the general public.

The budget shall be in compliance with the foundation budget. It is acknowledged that the foundation budget reflects the minimum recommended spending for a District, and excludes transportation costs, debt service costs, and costs associated with the acquisition of fixed assets.

The aforementioned items must, therefore, be budgeted in addition to the foundation budget, and funds to support those expenditures must be raised from the community, after the use of any offsetting revenues received from the state.

The Superintendent will serve as budget officer but may delegate portions of this responsibility to members of their staff, as they deem appropriate. The three general areas of responsibility for the Superintendent as budget officer are budget preparation, budget presentation, and budget administration.

A budget is a spending plan, which is developed well in advance of the fiscal year.

Circumstances may occur which necessitate changing spending priorities and redirecting funds within the budget accordingly. Revisions to the budget may be made from time to time by the Committee, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent.

Annual budgets for each school operated by the District shall be developed with input from the School Council and shall reflect the priorities established in the annual school improvement plan.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 71:34; 71:37 and 71:38N

## SOURCE: MASC

~~The annual budget is the financial expression of the goals of the School Committee in meeting the needs of all students.~~

~~The budget requires an orderly and cooperative effort to ensure sound fiscal practices for achieving the educational goals and objectives of the School Committee.~~

~~Public school budgeting is regulated and controlled by legislation, state regulations, and local school committee requirements. The operating budget for the school system will be prepared and presented in line with state policy and will be developed and refined in accordance with these same requirements.~~

~~The Superintendent will serve as budget officer, but may delegate portions of this responsibility to members of the staff, as deemed appropriate. The three general areas of responsibility for the Superintendent as budget officer will be budget preparation, budget presentation, and budget administration.~~

~~[Reference: M. G. L. 71:34, 71:37, and 71:38N]~~

~~[Adopted: October 1998]~~

~~[Reviewed: November 2003]~~

~~[Reviewed: February 2019]~~

~~[Reviewed: March 2022]~~

[Revised: 2025]

## **BUDGET ADOPTION PROCEDURES**

The district budget is adopted by the School Committee at the cost center level. Cost centers should represent appropriate levels of transparency for the Committee to oversee goal implementation while allowing for administrative day-to-day work. Cost centers will be agreed upon by the Committee and administration.

All revenue sources are subject to adoption by the School Committee. The budget is adopted by a simple majority.

~~Authority for adoption of the final school budget bottom line lies with the citizens who comprise, and who are entitled to vote at, the town meeting. The school budget is presented as part of the total town budget for action at the annual town meeting.~~

Authority for adoption of the final school budget lies with the City Council who are duly elected representatives of the citizens of Gardner. The school budget is presented as part of the total city budget for action by the City Council.

SOURCE: MASC Updated 2022

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. [71:34](#); [71:37](#)

~~Town Charter, (See local reference)~~

~~CROSS REF.: [DBJ](#), Budget Transfer Authority~~

~~**NOTE: Town and city charters should be checked for specific provisions relating to budget adoption procedures. Appropriate citations should be added as was done on the statement above. The above process is that of towns; changes will be necessary for cities.**~~

~~[Reference: M.G.L. 44:32]~~

~~[Adopted: October 1998]~~

~~[Reviewed: June 2002]~~

~~[Reviewed: December 2021]~~

~~{Revised: 2025}~~

## MEAL CHARGE POLICY

The School Committee is committed to providing students with healthy, nutritious meals each day so they can focus on school work, while also maintaining the financial integrity of meal programs, and minimizing any impact on students with charges for a la carte purchases.

The District provides free meals to all students (one free meal per meal service period.). However, unpaid charges for additional meals, or a la carte items place a large financial burden on the school district, as food services is a self-supporting entity within the district. The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with federal reporting requirements of the USDA Child Nutrition Program, as well as provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student balances.

### **Charges and Balances**

Each student will be allowed to take one regular meal per meal service period. Students may want to receive additional meals, or to purchase a la carte items. Students will pay for additional meals at the regular rate approved by the School Committee. Student Accounts will be maintained by the District Food and Nutrition Program as prescribed by the District and delineated in the Student Handbook.

The parent/guardian is responsible for any meal charges incurred beyond the free meals provided. If there is a financial hardship, a parent/guardian should contact food services directly to discuss payment options such as an individualized repayment plan.

### **Payments**

Payments for additional food purchases beyond the regular meal will be made to the District Food and Nutrition Program. Parents will be notified of account balances or deficits at regular intervals as prescribed by the District. At no time shall any staff member give payment notices to students unless that student is known to be an emancipated minor who is fully responsible for themselves or over the age of 18. If parents/guardians have issues with student purchases they should contact for assistance.

Parents/Guardians may pay in advance for anticipated purchases beyond the free meal allowed during each meal service period. Further details are available on the school district webpage and in student handbooks. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without a positive balance in their account on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student, whether positive or negative, will be carried over to the next school year.

All school cafeterias possess computerized point of sale/cash register systems that maintain records of all monies deposited and spent for each student and those records are available to parents/guardians by setting up an online account (see student handbooks for more details) or by speaking with the school's food service manager. The point of sale system is designed to prevent direct identification of a student's account status. Parents/guardians will receive automated low-balance notices. If notices do not result in payment, the food service manager shall turn the account over to the business office.

### **Refunds**

Refunds for withdrawn and/or graduating students require a written request for a refund of any money remaining in their account to be submitted. Graduating students also have the option to transfer funds to a sibling's account or to donate to a student in need with a written request.

### **Delinquent Accounts/Collections**

The Superintendent shall ensure that there are appropriate and effective collection procedures and internal controls within the school district's business office that meet the requirements of law.

Each school handbook shall contain detailed instructions for family assistance.

### **Policy Communications**

This policy shall be communicated to all staff and families at the beginning of each school year and to families transferring to the district during the year.

LEGAL REFS: MGL 71:72; USDA School Meal Program Guidelines May 2017,  
Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2023

CROSS REFS: JQ, Student Fees, Fines & Charges  
EFE, Civil Rights Complaint Policy for Child Nutrition Programs

### **SOURCE: MASC**

~~The School Committee is committed to providing students with healthy, nutritious meals each day so they can focus on school work, while also maintaining the financial integrity of meal programs and minimizing any impact on students with meal charges. However, unpaid meal charges place a large financial burden on the school district, as food services is a self-supporting entity within the district. The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with federal reporting requirements of the USDA Child Nutrition Program, as well as provide oversight and accountability for the collection of outstanding student meal balances.~~

~~The provisions of this Policy pertain to regular priced school meals only. The School Committee will provide a meal to students who forget or lose their lunch money.~~

### **Meal Charges and Balances**

~~Students will pay for meals at the regular rate approved by the School Committee and for their meal status (regular, reduced price, or free) each day. Payment options will be outlined in student handbooks and provided to parents of incoming students. After the balance reaches zero and enters the negative, students will not be allowed to purchase a la carte items including but not limited to a second entrée, snack, ice cream, or an additional beverage. The student will still be provided a~~

~~meal, and that meal will continue to be charged to the account at the standard lunch rate based on their meal status. The parent/guardian is responsible for any meal charges incurred. If there is a financial hardship, a parent/guardian should contact food services directly to discuss payment options such as an individualized repayment plan.~~

### **Payments**

~~Parents/Guardians are responsible for all meal payments to the food service program. Notices of low or deficit balances will be sent directly to parent/guardians via email or regular postal mail at regular intervals during the school year. At no time shall any staff member give payment notices to students unless that student is known to be an emancipated minor who is fully responsible for themselves or over the age of 18. If parent/guardians have issues with student purchases they should contact food services for assistance.~~

~~Parents/Guardians may pay for meals in advance. Further details are available on the school district webpage and in student handbooks. Funds should be maintained in accounts to minimize the possibility that a child may be without meal money on any given day. Any remaining funds for a particular student, whether positive or negative, will be carried over to the next school year.~~

~~All school cafeterias possess computerized point of sale/cash register systems that maintain records of all monies deposited and spent for each student and those records are available to parents by setting up an online account (see student handbooks for more details) or by speaking with the school's food service manager. The point of sale system is designed to prevent direct identification of a student's meal status. Parents will receive automated low balance emails or mailed notices weekly, if applicable. If notices do not result in payment, parents will receive a phone call from food services. If the phone call does not result in payment the food service manager shall turn the account over to the business office.~~

### **Refunds**

~~Refunds for withdrawn and/or graduating students require a written request (email, postal, or in person) for a refund of any money remaining in their account to be submitted. Graduating students also have the option to transfer funds to a sibling's account or to donate to a student in need with a written request.~~

### **Delinquent Accounts/Collections**

~~Failure to maintain up to date accounts may result in a delay of a student's extra-curricular school services, especially those that are fee based. Graduating seniors may lose the ability to participate in certain graduation related activities.~~

~~The Superintendent shall ensure that there are appropriate and effective collection procedures and internal controls within the school district's business office that meet the requirements of law.~~

~~If a student is without meal money on a consistent basis, the administration may investigate the situation more closely and take further action as needed. If financial hardship exists, parents and families are encouraged to apply for free or reduced price lunches for their child. Each school handbook shall contain detailed instructions for parental assistance.~~



**~~Policy Communications~~**

~~This Policy shall be communicated to all staff and families at the beginning of each school year and to families transferring to the district during the year.~~

~~[Reference: M.G.L. 71:72; USDA School Meal Program Guidelines, May 2017]~~

[Adopted: November 2018]

[Reviewed: April 2021]

[Revised: 2025]

## STUDENT DISCIPLINE

The School Committee believes that all students deserve every opportunity to achieve academic success in a safe, secure learning environment. Good citizenship in schools is based on respect and consideration for the rights of others. Students will be expected to conduct themselves in a way that the rights and privileges of others are not violated. They will be required to respect constituted authority, to conform to school rules and to those provisions of law that apply to their conduct.

Each Principal shall include prohibited actions in the student handbook or other publication to be made available to students and parents/guardians.

Principals and staff shall not use academic punishment of any form as a consequence to inappropriate behaviors/actions by students.

The Principal may, as a disciplinary measure, remove a student from privileges, such as extracurricular activities and attendance at school-sponsored events, based on the student's misconduct. Such a removal is not subject to the remainder of this policy, law, or regulation.

The Superintendent shall provide each Principal with a copy of the regulations promulgated by DESE and shall have each Principal sign a document acknowledging receipt thereof, which shall be placed in their personnel file.

### Suspension

#### **Out-of-School Suspension**

In every case of student misconduct for which ~~out-of-school~~ suspension may be imposed, a Principal shall consider ways to re-engage the student in learning. Unless specific reasons are documented as to why such alternative remedies are unsuitable or counter-productive, and/or in cases where the student's continued presence in school would pose a specific, documentable concern about the infliction of serious bodily injury or other serious harm upon another person while in school, principal shall not suspend or exclude a student; and avoid using long-term out-of-school suspension from school as a consequence until alternatives have been tried and their use and results documented.

Alternatives may include but not be limited to the use of evidence-based strategies and programs such as mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and collaborative problem-solving.

The superintendent and/or principal shall also implement district/school-wide models to re-engage students in the learning process which shall include but not be limited to and positive behavioral interventions and support models and trauma sensitive learning models.

#### **Notice of Suspension**

Except for emergency removal or an in-school suspension of less than 10 days, a Principal must provide the student and the parent oral and written notice, and provide the student an opportunity for a hearing and the parent an opportunity to participate in such hearing before imposing

suspension as a consequence for misconduct. The Principal shall provide both oral and written notice to the student and parent/guardian(s) in English and in the primary language of the home if other than English. The notice shall include the rights enumerated in law and regulation. To conduct a hearing without a parent present, the Principal must be able to document reasonable efforts to include the parent/guardian.

The principal or a designee shall notify the superintendent in writing, including by electronic means, of any out-of-school suspension imposed on a student enrolled in kindergarten through grade 3 prior to such suspension taking effect. That notification shall describe the student's alleged misconduct and the reasons for suspending the student out-of-school. For the purposes of this section the term "out-of-school suspension" shall mean a disciplinary action imposed by school officials to remove a student from participation in school activities for 1 day or more.

For any suspension or exclusion under this section, the principal or designee of a school in which the student is enrolled, shall provide the student and parent/guardian, notice of the charges and the reason for the suspension or exclusion in English and in the primary language spoken in the home of the student. The student shall receive the written notification and shall have the opportunity to meet with the principal, or a designee, to discuss the charges and reasons for the suspension or exclusion prior to the suspension or exclusion taking effect. The principal, or a designee, shall ensure that the parent or guardian of the student is included in the meeting, provided that such meeting may take place without the parent or guardian only if the principal, or a designee, can document reasonable efforts to include the parent or guardian in that meeting.

#### **In-School Suspension**

In every case of student misconduct for which in-school suspension may be imposed, a Principal shall consider ways to re-engage the student in learning; and avoid using short or long-term suspension from school as a consequence until alternatives have been tried. Alternatives may include the use of evidence-based strategies and programs such as mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and positive behavioral interventions and supports.

#### **Notice of Out-of-School Suspension**

Except for emergency removal or an in-school suspension of less than 10 days, a Principal must provide the student and the parent oral and written notice, and provide the student an opportunity for a hearing and the parent an opportunity to participate in such hearing before imposing suspension as a consequence for misconduct. The Principal shall provide both oral and written notice to the student and parent(s) in English and in the primary language of the home if other than English. The notice shall include the rights enumerated in law and regulation. To conduct a hearing without a parent present, the Principal must be able to document reasonable efforts to include the parent.

#### **Notice of In-School Suspension**

Except for emergency removal, the Principal must provide the student and the parent(s) oral and written notice, in English and in the primary language of the home if other than English, of the disciplinary offense, the reasons for concluding that the student committed the infraction, and the length of the proposed in-school suspension.

~~On the same day as the In-School Suspension decision, the principal shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent orally of the disciplinary offense, the reasons for concluding that the student committed the infraction, and the length of the In-School Suspension. The Principal will invite the student and parent(s) to a hearing for the day of the suspension or as soon as possible to discuss the student's academic performance and behavior, strategies for student engagement, and possible responses to the behavior before imposing an in-school suspension as a consequence for misconduct. The notice shall include the rights enumerated in law and regulation. The Principal must be able to document at least two attempts to notify the parent orally, as well as a written notice about the in-school suspension, inviting the parent to a meeting if such meeting has not yet occurred.~~

~~The Principal shall deliver such notice on the day of the suspension by hand delivery, certified mail, first class mail, email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or by other method of delivery agreed to by the Principal and the parent.~~

### **Emergency Removal**

A Principal may remove a student from school temporarily when a student is charged with a disciplinary offense and the continued presence of the student poses a danger to persons or property, or materially and substantially disrupts the order of the school, and, in the Principal's judgment, there is no alternative available to alleviate the danger or disruption.

The Principal shall immediately notify the Superintendent in writing of the removal including a description of the danger presented by the student.

The temporary removal shall not exceed two (2) school days following the day of the emergency removal, during which time the Principal shall: Make immediate and reasonable efforts to orally notify the student and the student's parent/guardian of the emergency removal, the reason for the need for emergency removal, and the other matters required in the notice as referenced in the applicable regulation; Provide written notice to the student and parent as required above including right enumerated in law and regulation; Provide the student an opportunity for a hearing with the Principal that complies with applicable regulations, and the parent/guardian an opportunity to attend the hearing, before the expiration of the two (2) school days, unless an extension of time for hearing is otherwise agreed to by the Principal, student, and parent/guardian; Render a decision orally on the same day as the hearing, and in writing no later than the following school day, which meets the requirements of applicable law and regulation.

The Principal shall also ensure adequate provisions have been made for the student's safety and transportation prior to removal.

### **In-School Suspension - Not More Than 10 Days Consecutively or Cumulatively**

The Principal may use in-school suspension as an alternative to short-term out-of-school suspension for disciplinary offenses. The Principal may impose an in-school suspension for a

disciplinary offense under this provision, provided that the Principal follows the process set forth in regulation and the student has the opportunity to make academic progress as required by law and regulation. The in-school suspension may not exceed 10 days consecutively or cumulatively in a school year.

#### **Principal's Hearing – In-School Suspension**

The hearing with the Principal shall be to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, determine if the student committed the disciplinary offense, and if so, the length of the in-school suspension, which shall not exceed ten days, cumulatively or consecutively in a school year.

The Principal shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent/guardian orally as soon as possible of the disciplinary offense, the reasons for concluding that the student committed the infraction, and the length of the in-school suspension. The principal shall invite the parent to a meeting to discuss the students academic performance and behavior, strategies for student engagement, and possible responses to the behavior.

The Principal shall send written notice to the student and parent about the in-school suspension, including the reason and the length of the in-school suspension, and inviting the parent to a meeting with the principal as identified above if the meeting has not already occurred. for it, and, if the student is suspended, the type and duration of suspension, which shall not exceed ten (10) days, cumulatively or consecutively, in a school year, and the opportunity to make up assignments and such other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of removal, as required by law and regulation. The determination shall be in writing and may be in the form of an update to the original written notice.

If the student is in a public preschool program or in grades K through 3, the Principal shall send a copy of the written determination to the Superintendent and explain the reasons for imposing an in-school suspension, before the suspension takes effect.

#### **Principal's Hearing - Short Term Out-of-School Suspension of up to 10 Days**

The hearing with the Principal shall be to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, determine if the student committed the disciplinary offense, and if so, the consequences for the infraction. At a minimum, the Principal shall discuss the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student also shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts, that the Principal should consider in determining whether other remedies and consequences may be appropriate as set forth in law and regulation.

The Principal shall provide the parent, if present, an opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances, that the Principal should consider in determining consequences for the student.

The Principal shall, based on the available information, including mitigating circumstances, determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, what remedy or consequence will be imposed.

The Principal shall notify the student and parent of the determination and the reasons for it, and, if the student is suspended, the type and duration of suspension and the opportunity to make up assignments and such other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of removal, as required by law and regulation. The determination shall be in writing and may be in the form of an update to the original written notice.

If the student is in a public preschool program or in grades K through 3, the Principal shall send a copy of the written determination to the Superintendent and explain the reasons for imposing an out-of-school suspension, before the short-term suspension takes effect.

#### **Principal's Hearing—In-School Suspension**

~~The hearing with the Principal shall be to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, determine if the student committed the disciplinary offense, and if so, the consequences for the infraction.~~

~~At a minimum, the Principal shall discuss the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student also shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts, that the Principal should consider in determining whether other remedies and consequences may be appropriate as set forth in law and regulation.~~

~~The Principal shall provide the parent, if present, an opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances, that the Principal should consider in determining consequences for the student.~~

~~The Principal shall, based on the available information, including mitigating circumstances, determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, what remedy or consequence will be imposed.~~

~~The Principal shall notify the student and parent of the determination and the reasons for it, and, if the student is suspended, the type and duration of suspension, which shall not exceed ten (10) days, cumulatively or consecutively, in a school year, and the opportunity to make up assignments and such other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of removal, as required by law and regulation. The determination shall be in writing and may be in the form of an update to the original written notice.~~

~~If the student is in a public preschool program or in grades K through 3, the Principal shall send a copy of the written determination to the Superintendent and explain the reasons for imposing an in-school suspension, before the suspension takes effect.~~

#### **Principal's Hearing - Long Term Out-of-School Suspension of more than 10 days but less than 90 days (consecutive or cumulative)**

The hearing with the Principal shall be to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, determine if the student committed the disciplinary offense, and if so, the consequences for the infraction.

At a minimum, in addition to the rights afforded a student in a short-term suspension hearing, the student shall have the following rights: In advance of the hearing, the opportunity to review the student's record and the documents upon which the Principal may rely in making a determination to suspend the student or not; The right to be represented by counsel or a lay person of the student's choice, at the student's/parent's expense; The right to produce witnesses on his or her behalf and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, but the student may not be compelled to do so; The right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school district; The right to request that the hearing be recorded by the Principal, and to receive a copy of the audio recording upon request. If the student or parent requests an audio recording, the Principal shall inform all participants before the hearing that an audio record will be made and a copy will be provided to the student and parent upon request.

The Principal shall provide the parent, if present, an opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances, that the Principal should consider in determining consequences for the student.

The Principal shall, based on the evidence, determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, after considering mitigating circumstances and alternatives to suspension as required by law and regulation, what remedy or consequence will be imposed, in place of or in addition to a long-term suspension. The Principal shall send the written determination to the student and parent by hand-delivery, certified mail, first-class mail, email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or any other method of delivery agreed to by the Principal and the parent/guardian. The notice shall include the rights enumerated in law and regulation.

If the Principal decides to suspend the student, the written determination shall: Identify the disciplinary offense, the date on which the hearing took place, and the participants at the hearing; Set out the key facts and conclusions reached by the Principal; Identify the length and effective date of the suspension, as well as a date of return to school; Include notice of the student's opportunity to receive education services to make academic progress during the period of removal from school as required by law and regulation; Inform the student of the right to appeal the Principal's decision to the Superintendent or designee, but only if the Principal has imposed a long-term suspension. Notice of the right of appeal shall be in English and the primary language of the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate, and shall include the following information: The process for appealing the decision, including that the student or parent must file a written notice of appeal with the Superintendent within five (5) calendar days of the effective date of the long-term suspension; provided that within the five (5) calendar days, the student or parent may request and receive from the Superintendent an extension of time for filing the written notice for up to seven (7) additional calendar days; and that the long-term suspension will remain in effect unless and until the Superintendent decides to reverse the Principal's determination on appeal.

If the student is in a public preschool program or in grades K through 3, the Principal shall send a copy of the written determination to the Superintendent and explain the reasons for imposing an out-of-school suspension before the suspension takes effect.

#### **Superintendent's Hearing**

A student who is placed on long-term out-of-school suspension following a hearing with the Principal shall have the right to appeal the Principal's decision to the Superintendent. The student or parent shall file a notice of appeal with the Superintendent within the time period noted above (see Principal's hearing - Suspension of more than 10 days). If the appeal is not timely filed, the Superintendent may deny the appeal, or may allow the appeal in his or her discretion, for good cause.

The Superintendent shall hold the hearing within three (3) school days of the student's request, unless the student or parent requests an extension of up to seven (7) additional calendar days, in which case the Superintendent shall grant the extension.

The Superintendent shall make a good faith effort to include the parent in the hearing. The Superintendent shall be presumed to have made a good faith effort if ~~he or she has~~ they have made efforts to find a day and time for the hearing that would allow the parent and Superintendent to participate. The Superintendent shall send written notice to the parent of the date, time, and location of the hearing.

The Superintendent shall conduct a hearing to determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense of which the student is accused, and if so, what the consequence shall be. The Superintendent shall arrange for an audio recording of the hearing, a copy of which shall be provided to the student or parent upon request. The Superintendent shall inform all participants before the hearing that an audio record will be made of the hearing and a copy will be provided to the student and parent upon request. The student shall have all the rights afforded the student at the Principal's hearing for long-term suspension.

The Superintendent shall issue a written decision within five (5) calendar days of the hearing which meets the requirements of law and regulation. If the Superintendent determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the Superintendent may impose the same or a lesser consequence than the Principal, but shall not impose a suspension greater than that imposed by the Principal's decision. The decision of the Superintendent shall be the final decision of the school district with regard to the suspension.

#### **Expulsion**

Expulsion is defined as the removal of a student from school for more than ninety (90) school days, indefinitely, or permanently as allowed by law.

Suspension or Expulsion for Weapons, Controlled Substances, Assaults on School Personnel, Felony Charges or Convictions M.G.L. c. 37H and 37H1/2 provide that students may be subject to expulsion by the Principal for any of the following actions:



- Found on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon or a controlled substance.
- Assault of a teacher, administrator or other school staff member on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events including athletic games.
- Conviction of a felony or adjudication or admission in court of guilt with respect to such a felony or felony charge or felony delinquency complaint or conviction if the principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

A school principal has the authority to hold a student expulsion hearing and recommend that a student be expelled from school. The results of a principal's expulsion hearing may be appealed to the school superintendent upon request.

~~When either a principal's or superintendent's level hearing is held, the Gardner School Committee will be apprised that an expulsion hearing is convened as well as the final results of the hearing. At the conclusion of the hearing, a student will be deemed to either:~~

- ~~• Permanently expelled from school;~~
- ~~• Found to be acceptable for regular school attendance;~~
- ~~• Or allowed to continue in school with carefully delineated written requirements.~~

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The superintendent's level disciplinary hearing is considered the terminal point of the student appeal process. ~~Any student expelled from school for such an offense shall be afforded an opportunity to receive educational services and make academic progress.~~

When a student is expelled under these sections, no school or school district within the commonwealth shall be required to admit such student.

Students previously expelled from another school system seeking admission to Gardner Public Schools will not be accepted for local admission.

Any student expelled from school for such an offense shall be afforded an opportunity to receive educational services and make academic progress.

### **Academic Progress**

Any student who is suspended or expelled shall have the opportunity to earn credits, make up assignments, tests, papers, and other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of his or her removal from the classroom or school. The Principal shall inform the student and parent of this opportunity in writing, in English and in the primary language of the home, when such suspension or expulsion is imposed.

Any student who is expelled or suspended from school for more than ten (10) consecutive days, whether in school or out of school, shall have an opportunity to receive education services and make academic progress toward meeting state and local requirements, through the school-wide education service plan.

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The Principal shall develop a school-wide education service plan describing the education services that the school district will make available to students who are excluded or suspended from school for more than ten (10) consecutive days. The plan shall include the process for notifying such students and their parents of the services and arranging such services. Education services shall be based on, and be provided in a manner consistent with, the academic standards and curriculum frameworks established for all students under the law.

The Principal shall notify the parent/guardian and student of the opportunity to receive education services at the time the student is excluded or placed on long-term suspension. Notice shall be provided in English and in the primary language spoken in the student's home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate. The notice shall include a list of the specific education services that are available to the student and contact information for a school district staff member who can provide more detailed information.

For each student expelled or suspended from school for more than ten (10) consecutive days, whether in-school or out-of-school, the school district shall document the student's enrollment in education services. For data reporting purposes, the school shall track and report attendance, academic progress, and such other data as directed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

#### **Reporting**

The school district shall collect and annually report data to the DESE regarding in-school suspensions, short- and long-term suspensions, expulsions, emergency removals, access to education services, and such other information as may be required by the DESE.

The Principal of each school shall periodically review discipline data by selected student populations, including but not limited to race and ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, English language learner status, and student with a disability status in accordance with law and regulation.

#### **Non-Discrimination**

School staff responsible for implementing this Policy shall do so without discrimination based on race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, ~~or age,~~ homelessness or limited English proficiency.

#### **DISCIPLINE of STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

~~All students are expected to meet the standards of behavior required by the district and the individual schools within the district. There are, however, some specific considerations regarding the discipline of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities, as defined by federal and state law and regulations, shall be subject to the provisions of the student handbook except as otherwise provided by this policy or by the student's Individualized Educational Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan. An eligible student under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is regarded as having a physical or mental impairment which limits one or more major life functions.~~

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and M.G.L.c.71B require that additional provisions be made for students who have been found by an Evaluation Team to have special needs and whose individualized program is described in an IEP.

The IDEA and M.G.L. c. 71B allow school personnel to move a student with disabilities to an Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES) for up to 45 school days, if that student is in possession of a dangerous weapon at school or a school function or on school property, is in possession or uses a controlled substance or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance while at school or a school function or on school property, or inflicts serious bodily injury on a person, including him/herself. The appropriate IAES shall be determined by the IEP Team.

The IDEA and M.G.L. c. 71B also allow school personnel the option of asking a hearing officer or a court to move children with disabilities to an IAES for up to 45 school days, if they are substantially likely to injure themselves or others in their current placement. If a special education student has been placed in an interim alternative education setting as a result of a disciplinary action, the student may remain in the interim setting for a period not to exceed 45 days. Thereafter, the special education student will return to the previously agreed upon educational placement unless either a hearing officer orders another placement or the parent(s) agrees to another placement.

-  
When a special needs student has been suspended for more than ten (10) consecutive or cumulative days in a school year, such that a substantial change in placement is occurring or will occur, the IEP Team will meet to conduct a manifestation determination. Relevant members of the Team meet for the manifestation determination, and they answer two questions, after reviewing relevant documents and the misconduct of the student:

1. Is the misconduct the direct result of the District's/school's failure to implement the student's IEP?

2. Is the misconduct caused by, or does it have a direct and substantial relationship to the student's disability/disabilities?

A summary of the manifestation determination review will be written and a copy provided to the Parent(s)/guardian(s) as soon as possible after the review, but no later than five (5) school days after the review.

If the Team finds that the misconduct was a manifestation of the student's disability, the Team will arrange for a functional behavioral assessment (if one has not been conducted on the student) and the development or modification of a behavior intervention plan. The school may still be able to implement an IAES (see above). If the IAES is not possible, then the student will remain in his/her current placement unless the parent (s) agrees to another placement.

If the Team finds that the misconduct was not a manifestation of the student's disability, then the student may be disciplined according to the discipline policy in the student handbook. The student will receive educational services during this period of suspension or exclusion. The Team must determine the educational services necessary for a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and for the manner and location of these services.

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The Principal (or designee) will notify the Special Education Office of the suspendable offenses of a special needs student and a record will be kept of such notices.

~~If a parent(s) disagrees with the Team's decision of manifestation determination or with a placement of a student in an interim alternative educational setting or any other disciplinary action, the parent(s) has the right to request an expedited hearing from the Bureau of Special Education Appeals. If school personnel are concerned that the student's placement may result in injury to others, they may request a hearing with a Bureau of Special Education Appeals hearing officer.~~

**~~Students Identified As Having a Disability and Provided with a Section 504 Plan~~**

~~A student on a Section 504 Plan may be disciplined like any other non-disabled student. However, if the student is going to be suspended for ten (10) or more consecutive days, expelled or suspended for more than ten (10) cumulative days (and there is a change in placement as a result), then a manifestation determination review shall be conducted. The student's 504 Team shall convene, and answer two questions, after reviewing relevant documents and the misconduct of the student:~~

- ~~1. Is the misconduct the direct result of the District's/school's failure to implement the student's 504 Plan?~~
- ~~2. Is the misconduct caused by, or does it have a direct and substantial relationship to the student's disability/disabilities?~~

~~A summary of the manifestation determination review will be written and a copy provided to the Parent(s)/guardian(s) as soon as possible after the review, but no later than five (5) school days after the review.~~

~~If the Team finds that the misconduct was not a manifestation of the student's disability, then the student may be disciplined according to the discipline policy in this handbook. Upon returning from his/her suspension/expulsion, the Team will arrange for a functional behavioral assessment (if one has not been conducted on the student) and the development or modification of a behavior intervention plan.~~

~~The Principal (or designee) will notify the Student Support Services Office of the suspendable offenses of Section 504 students and a record will be kept of such notices.~~

~~If a parent/guardian disagrees with the result of a manifestation determination hearing, or if school personnel are concerned that the student's placement may result in injury to others, they may request a hearing with a Bureau of Special Education Appeals hearing officer.~~

**~~Students Not Yet Determined to be Eligible for Special Education or Accommodations under Section 504~~**

~~The law applies to general education students if the school system had knowledge prior to the misconduct that the student was disabled. Under the law, a school district is presumed to have "had knowledge" that a general education student was disabled if the student's:~~

~~Parent(s)/guardian(s) has "expressed concern in writing" to the school district that the student is in need of special education and related services;~~

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~~Parent(s)/guardian(s) has requested a special education evaluation of the child; or~~

~~District staff have “expressed concern” directly to the special education direction or other supervisory personnel specific concerns about a pattern of behavior demonstrated by the student.~~

~~If there was no knowledge, the parent(s)/guardian(s) may request an expedited evaluation.~~

~~During this period, the student may be suspended or expelled under normal School Committee policy.~~

Legal Reference: M.G.L. ~~71:84; 71:85, 76:16; 76:21; 76.17; 71:37H; 71:37H1/2; 71:37H3/4;~~  
603 CMR 53.00

~~603 CMR 53.10 (3) through (5)~~

~~603 CMR 53.13 (1)~~

[Chapter 222 An Act Relative to Student Access to Educational Sevices and Exclusion from School](#)

[Supporting Students with Disabilities and Avoiding the Discriminatory Use of Student Discipline under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#)  
[And](#)

[Questions and Answers Addressing the Needs of Children with Disabilities and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act’s \(IDEA\) Discipline Provisions](#)

NOTE: The DESE regulations on student discipline and this policy, consistent with law, set forth the minimum procedural requirements applicable to the suspension of a student for a disciplinary offense other than: possession of a dangerous weapon; possession of a controlled substance; assault on a member of the educational staff; or a felony charge or felony delinquency complaint or conviction, or adjudication or admission of guilt with respect to such a felony, if a Principal determines that the student’s continued presence in the school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school , as provided in M.G.L. c. 71, S. 37H or 37H ½ . The Principal, pursuant to the previously referenced statute may remove a student who has committed any of the disciplinary offenses above referenced from school more than 90 days in a school year except that the removal from school for such offences is subject to the provision of continuing educational services needed to make educational progress and, the requirement that all school districts regardless of the type of offense shall report school discipline data and analysis to DESE. Also, the prohibited actions above referenced are subject to the provision that allows the Commissioner to investigate each school that has a significant number of students suspended and expelled for more than 10 cumulative days in a school year and to make recommendations thereon.

~~Chapter 222, An Act Relative to Student Access to Educational Sevices and Exclusion from School, addresses continuation of educational services for students when they are excluded from school.~~

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~~New Federal Guidance related to Supporting Students with Disabilities and Avoiding the Discriminatory Use of Student Discipline under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that students are effectively supported when responding to behavior that is based on a student's disability that could lead to student discipline has been added as a legal reference.~~

[Reference: M.G.L. 71:37H]

[Adopted: 3/8/99]

[Revised: May 2003]

[Revised: November 2006]

[Reviewed: February 2014]

[Revised: February 2021]

[Revised: June 2021]

[Revised: December 2022]

[Revised: 2025]

# Gardner Public Schools

Dr. Mark J. Pellegrino, *Superintendent*



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## Superintendent Goals FY26

### District Improvement

#### **Goal 1: Fully implement IEP accommodations matrix in CPTs across the district**

By May 31, 2026, 95% of all Common Planning Time meetings will utilize the district-designed Accommodations Matrix to design lessons using high-leveraged individualized practices to support our students with disabilities.

#### **Goal 2: 80% of core academic classrooms will have engaging classroom lessons**

By May 31, 2026, 80% of core classrooms will engage at least 80% of their students as measured by the Classroom Support System tool. Teachers will utilize the high-leverage classroom practices, as well as student-to-student discourse, to ensure they have an engaging classroom.

### Student Learning

#### **Goal 1: Reduce academic equity gaps for students who are Multilingual Learners or have Special Needs**

By May 31, 2026, equity gaps of SWD and ML learners meeting/exceeding learning expectations measured on ELA and math Star testing will be reduced by 10% compared with the aggregate group.

#### **Goal 2: Students in Grades K-4 will be Reading on Grade Level**

By May 31, 2025, at least 75% of students in grades K-4 will meet or exceed grade level reading standards as measured by DIBELS.

### Professional Practice

#### **Participate in Lynch Leadership Academy District-level Supervisory Program**

By May, 2026, the superintendent will have participated in three full days of PD and additional coaching from the Lynch Leadership Academy to inform coaching, supervision, and evaluation of principals.



## Gardner Public Schools District Improvement Plan

**2024-2027**

### Mission

Gardner Public Schools will work side by side with our families to prepare students for their future success in college, career, and community endeavors. This will be done in a safe, caring, just, and equitable environment.

### Core Values

Community   Appreciation   Responsibility   Excellence

### Vision

**EVERY CHILD, IN EVERY CLASSROOM, EVERY DAY, WILL:**

***feel welcomed, safe, and included in our community;***

- Adults will personally welcome each child as they enter the school and each classroom.
- The layout of the school and each classroom will be inviting and conducive to learning.
- Students will learn social/emotional skills through direct instruction, supports, and institutional practices.
- Schools will actively engage families in the education of their children and community.

***have adults consistently interact in ways that foster positive, supportive relationships;***

- School expectations, practices, and rules will be informed by the chronological and actual developmental levels of the children we serve.
- Adult responses to children's behaviors will be empathetic and caring, considering their comprehensive knowledge of the child's development and any possible trauma or stressors.
- The school will work proactively and collaboratively with families to support the whole child.
- Disciplinary practices are restorative rather than punitive.

***and be engaged in relevant, academically rigorous instruction, informed by data.***

- Each lesson will incorporate rigorous student tasks that engage all learners, provoke higher-order thinking, monitor each student's progress, and provide feedback to students for improvement.
- The schools will monitor and adapt their instruction to ensure students learn the skills and knowledge to prepare them for their own future.

### Theory of Action

***IF we have a culture of dignity and inclusion for all;***

***AND we hold high expectations that are aligned with grade level district and state standards & objectives for the social/emotional, mental health, and academic outcomes for our students;***

***AND we collect, analyze, and respond to relevant data for all students individually and collectively, providing tiered supports based on that data;***

***AND we provide teachers with adequate time, training, support, leadership, and resources focused on equity;***

***AND we work in collaboration with families and community partners to engage in shared decision making for effective educational programming;***

***THEN All students will achieve academic success and career readiness; and will develop the social emotional wellness required to thrive as contributing members of their community and workplace.***

### 2024-2025 District Priority

Grades K-7 will implement inclusive Tier 1 lessons using HQIM with fidelity and integrity to ensure Students with Disabilities have access to grade-level instruction and collaborative, active engagement with their peers.





## Gardner Public Schools District Improvement Plan

| Strategic Objectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. High expectations aligned with grade level district and state standards &amp; objectives for social/emotional/behavioral wellness, and successful academic outcomes for all students:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>2. Provide teachers with adequate time, training, support, leadership, and resources focused on equity:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>3. Collect, analyze, and respond to relevant academic and social/emotional/behavioral data for all students individually and collectively, providing tiered supports based on that data:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>4. Collaborate with families and community partners to engage in shared decision-making for effective educational programming:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Action Steps                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <p><b>1A)</b> Create, implement, and assess clear, high level common expectations for student learning aligned with grade level district and state standards &amp; objectives</p> <p><b>1B)</b> Develop/revise rigorous, challenging learning activities and instructional strategies that support social emotional and academic growth and develop positive learning partnerships</p> <p><b>1C)</b> Implement systemic inclusive practices and co-teaching practices</p> <p><b>1D)</b> Develop a Vision of Excellent Instruction and Monitor Cycle of Instructional Improvement</p> | <p><b>2A)</b> Support for sustained effective Co-Teaching/ Inclusion practices</p> <p><b>2B)</b> Support for all administrators, instructional/behavioral coaches in effective observation/evaluation practices</p> <p><b>2C)</b> Support District and Building MTSS Teams through the development of systems, data and practices</p> <p><b>2D)</b> Support for improved instruction and intervention in Early Literacy</p> | <p><b>3A)</b> Identify data points to be collected, analyzed, and monitored to determine student achievement and progress</p> <p><b>3B)</b> District and building data teams to monitor academic and non-academic data and plan/implement targeted tiered supports &amp; interventions</p> <p><b>3C)</b> Plan and implement tiered small group learning supports based on data analysis</p> <p><b>3D)</b> Revise special education/intervention practices to reduce CDR and Restraints</p> | <p><b>4A)</b> Expand our strategic partnerships through existing parent forums (PTO, SEPAC, School Council, District MTSS Team)</p> <p><b>4B)</b> Expand our stakeholder membership on building level Tier 1 Teams through attendance and/or parent partners</p> <p><b>4C)</b> Improve participation and scores on School Climate Survey across stakeholder groups</p> <p><b>4D)</b> Improve staff and family participation at school wide events</p> |



## **Gardner Public Schools District Improvement Plan**

### **Outcomes – By 2027:**

- 1) Academic MTSS Tiers 1, 2, 3 will be developed and Tiers 1 & 2 will be implemented
  - a. Establish a District MTSS Academic Team with a regular meeting schedule, purpose, self assessment, agreement on district data sources/points, a progress monitoring schedule and written action plan.
  - b. Identify and develop fidelity measures for building level Tiers 1 & 2 teaming, instructional practices, data and systems with 70% fidelity across all buildings
  - c. Establish a fidelity measure and monitoring schedule for Grades K-7 implementation of inclusive Tiers 1 & 2 lessons using HQIM with fidelity and integrity to ensure Students with Disabilities have access to grade-level instruction and collaborative, active engagement with their peers with 70% fidelity across all buildings
  - d. SWD for MCAS growth targets will be met
  - e. 10% increase of SWD meeting or exceeding MCAS
- 2) MTSS SEL Tier 1
  - f. 80% of building classrooms will meet classroom support system high leverage practices goal of 80% engaged and on task.
- 3) Close equity gaps, specifically:
  - g. Gap between SWD and all students for MCAS will be reduced by 5% each year or 15% by 2027
  - h. Chronic absenteeism rate for SWDs and MLL will be no higher than annual state accountability targets for all schools/district
  - i. Drop-out rate for each subgroup will be no higher than the aggregate
  - j. Building level office referrals (major) will decrease by 5% each year or 15% by 2027
  - k. Reduce suspensions, restraints, and time-out usage for SWD by 25% by 2027
- 4) Improve School Climate and Partnerships
  - l. Increased participation on Climate Survey by 25% by the end of 2027
  - m. Increased total and sub scores on Climate Survey at or above comparison age national averages
  - n. Parent attendance average will increase by 25% at school wide events from 2024-25 SY baseline attendance as compared to 2026-2027 SY average attendance.



**Gardner Public Schools  
District Improvement Plan**

| <b>Implementation Timeline</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                  |                                                                             |                             |                               |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                                | <b>Activity/Outcome</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>Person(s) Responsible</b>                     | <b>Measurement Tool(s)</b>                                                  | <b>Date to be Completed</b> | <b>Status</b>                 |
|                                | Establish clear expectations for tier 1 academic systems/structures/ practices                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>District and Building Tiered Teams</b>        | <b>Expectations/ Implementation Manuals/Tools</b>                           | <b>Fall 2024</b>            | <b>Complete &amp; Ongoing</b> |
|                                | Establish and implement a structured Common Planning Time (CPT) to plan high level student tasks and evidence-based instructional practices for all learners                                                                                                                                                              | <b>MTSS District and Building Admin Teams</b>    | <b>Fidelity Check Protocols and Checklist Tools</b>                         | <b>Fall 2024</b>            | <b>Complete &amp; Ongoing</b> |
|                                | Establish and implement a structured system for observing/monitoring CPT meetings and classroom instruction                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>MTSS District and Building Admin Teams</b>    | <b>Fidelity Check Data of CPTs and Tier 1 HQIM Instruction</b>              | <b>Fall 2024</b>            | <b>Complete &amp; Ongoing</b> |
|                                | Establish and implement a structured system for feedback and follow-up of CPT meetings and classroom instruction                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>MTSS District and Building Admin Teams</b>    | <b>Ed Eval Observation/ Feedback Tools</b>                                  | <b>Fall 2024</b>            | <b>In Progress</b>            |
|                                | Support use of data dashboard of district-level/grade level student academic/SEL achievement/growth and social/emotional/behavioral wellness for improved analysis and decision-making<br>Create & implement a structure for analyzing data to create targeted, specific instructional strategies for struggling learners | <b>District Academic/SEL Teams</b>               | <b>Open Architects Dashboard with SEL and Academic student Outcome Data</b> | <b>Fall 2024</b>            | <b>Complete &amp; Ongoing</b> |
|                                | Create communication strategies to encourage parent participation on Climate Survey                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>District MTSS/FE</b>                          |                                                                             | <b>Fall 2024</b>            | <b>Complete &amp; Ongoing</b> |
|                                | Create and use metric for parent attendance at school wide events                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>District MTSS /FE</b>                         | <b>Attendance metric TB developed</b>                                       | <b>Fall 2024</b>            | <b>Complete &amp; Ongoing</b> |
|                                | Fully implement MTSS Tier 1 academic systems/practices/supports                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>MTSS Academic District and Building Teams</b> | <b>Learning Walk/ Observation Data/ Fidelity Check Data (Rigor Rubric)</b>  | <b>June 2025</b>            | <b>In Progress</b>            |



**Gardner Public Schools  
District Improvement Plan**

| <b>Implementation Timeline</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                              |                                                                                   |                             |                               |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                                | <b>Activity/Outcome</b>                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Person(s) Responsible</b>                                 | <b>Measurement Tool(s)</b>                                                        | <b>Date to be Completed</b> | <b>Status</b>                 |
|                                | Facilitate building leadership teams (BLTs) to provide support and training for effective facilitation of CPTs                                                                                          | <b>District and Building Leadership</b>                      | <b>Fidelity Check Data, PD Survey Data</b>                                        | <b>June 2025</b>            | <b>Complete &amp; Ongoing</b> |
|                                | Identify/plan PD for building staff with a focus on SWDs and MLs                                                                                                                                        |                                                              |                                                                                   |                             | <b>In Progress</b>            |
|                                | Assess academic/SEL achievement and growth by grade level and by subgroups at least 2 times per year for adjustment of supports/practices                                                               | <b>Building MTSS Teams</b>                                   | <b>STAR, DIBELs, SWIS, BESS, District Data SEL Tool/Open Architects Dashboard</b> | <b>June 2025</b>            | <b>Complete and Ongoing</b>   |
|                                | Establish and implement a structured system for data-informed PD to improve facilitation of CPT meetings and implementation of evidence-based classroom instructional practices focused on SWDs and MLs | <b>MTSS District and Building Admin/BLT/ Tiered Teams</b>    | <b>Fidelity Check Data of CPTs and Tier 1 HQIM Instruction/Learning Walk Data</b> | <b>June 2025</b>            | <b>In Progress</b>            |
|                                | Monitor progress of reduced suspension rates, increase alternatives and training to reduce suspension rates                                                                                             | <b>Building Admin Teams/District Team</b>                    | <b>Bi-Annual District Data Review of SSDR</b>                                     | <b>June 2025</b>            | <b>Complete and Ongoing</b>   |
|                                | Progress Monitor fidelity and accountability measures of CSS practice to ensure system in place                                                                                                         | <b>District MTSS SEL/Building MTSS SEL</b>                   | <b>Existing spreadsheet</b>                                                       | <b>June 2025</b>            | <b>Complete and Ongoing</b>   |
|                                | District wide CPT practices incorporate high leverage accommodations for SWD and MLs using tools                                                                                                        | <b>Special Education Administrators/ Principals/ML Admin</b> | <b>Learning Walk Data/Fidelity tool</b>                                           | <b>June 2025</b>            | <b>In Progress</b>            |
|                                | Establish clear expectations for Tier 2 academic assessment & data and instructional systems/structures/ practices                                                                                      | <b>MTSS District and Building Tier 2 Teams</b>               | <b>Expectations/ Implementation Manuals/Tools</b>                                 | <b>June 2026</b>            |                               |



**Gardner Public Schools  
District Improvement Plan**

| <b>Implementation Timeline</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                   |                                                                                                  |                             |               |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
|                                | <b>Activity/Outcome</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>Person(s) Responsible</b>                      | <b>Measurement Tool(s)</b>                                                                       | <b>Date to be Completed</b> | <b>Status</b> |
|                                | Develop and initiate MTSS Tier 2 academic assessment & data/instructional systems/practices/supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a robust structure that connects specific skill deficits with targeted &amp; specific skill supports/interventions</li> </ul> | <b>MTSS District and Building Tier 2 Teams</b>    | <b>Student Outcome Data, Learning Walk/ Observation Data/ Fidelity Check Data (Rigor Rubric)</b> | <b>June 2026</b>            |               |
|                                | Assess academic/SEL achievement and growth by grade level and by subgroups at least 2 times per year for adjustment of supports/practices                                                                                                                                         | <b>Building MTSS Teams</b>                        | <b>STAR, DIBELS, SWIS, BESS, District Data SEL Tool/Open Architects Dashboard</b>                | <b>June 2026</b>            |               |
|                                | Full implementation of IEP matrix in CPTs across the district                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Building Admin.</b>                            | <b>CPT Fidelity Checklist</b>                                                                    | <b>June 2026</b>            |               |
|                                | Implement a tier 1 CSS observation 2 times per year to drive PD and proactively identify classroom supports                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Building Admin. &amp; Tier 1 MTSS SEL Team</b> | <b>CSS Tool &amp; Tier 1 CSS Spreadsheet</b>                                                     | <b>June 2026</b>            |               |
|                                | Identify structure for parent involvement with MTSS tiered teams at least 2 times per year                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>MTSS Admin.</b>                                | <b>Action Plan/Agendas/ Meeting Notes</b>                                                        | <b>June 2026</b>            |               |
|                                | Identify structure to increase student supports through agency/community involvement with high needs students                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>MTSS Admin.</b>                                | <b>Action Plan</b>                                                                               | <b>June 2026</b>            |               |
|                                | Establish clear expectations for tier 3 academic assessment & data/instructional systems/structures/practices                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>MTSS District and Building Tier 2 Teams</b>    | <b>Expectations/ Implementation Manuals/Tools</b>                                                | <b>June 2027</b>            |               |



# Gardner Public Schools

Catherine A. Goguen, Ed.D., *Chief Academic Officer*

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October 6, 2025

## Curriculum and Instruction Update

### Home School Update

During the 2023-2024 school year the District approved home school programming for 81 families which includes 135 students. During the 2024-2025 school year, the District approved homeschool programming for 70 families, which includes 124 students. To date, the District has approved homeschool programming for 77 families, which includes 121 students. These numbers are approximately double what they were prior to COVID but seem to be remaining steady since 2021. The numbers also do not reflect the same families being homeschooled as each year several students leave homeschool programs for various reasons, and new families enroll in homeschool programs.

### Curriculum/Assessment

The District is focused this year on utilizing academic tiered teams at each building to develop/refine systems, structures and protocols for implementing effective tiered instruction and academic supports. Each building tiered team will use instructional fidelity data and student outcome data to monitor progress of implementation of high quality instructional materials and assessment materials, as well as student achievement.

Gardner Elementary School is fully implementing tier one team practices and is beginning to develop tier 2 structures and expectations for implementation. All other schools are currently developing their tier 1 systems, structures and protocols. The central office team and the District MTSS Academic Team will support this work at the building levels by providing guidance and feedback for improved practices/implementation.

### District/School Accountability

MCAS assessments were administered during the Spring of 2025 in grades 3-8 and 10, and the results of the 2025 MCAS administration determine District accountability status. The District's overall accountability status is "Not requiring assistance or intervention" and making moderate progress toward targets. Gardner Middle School and Gardner Elementary School will each be working with a Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Statewide System of Support (SSoS) team to address targeted areas of focus. A full report of the District's MCAS results will be presented at the November School Committee Meeting.



# Gardner Public Schools

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## Multilingual Learners Update –October 2025

### New Enrollments

The district has seen an increase of 54 students identified as English Language Learners over the past 90 days. This brings the total number of students identified as multilingual learners to 399 with 260 of them currently enrolled in ESL classes. There has been a lot of movement into and out of the district, so this represents an increase of 10 multilingual learners from the same time last year. The remainder of identified students have reached the language proficiency benchmark that designates them as former EL students. Students who exit the program are monitored by teachers for 4 years to ensure their continued success.

### Parent Engagement

We held our first family event, Family Game Night, on September 30. There were 25 people in attendance. We all had a great time playing games including Boggle, Mancala, Connect Four, Uno and more. We discussed ELPAC with those in attendance and hope some families will choose to join us. We will continue to talk about ELPAC at family events and hold meetings throughout the year both virtually and in person. Our next family event will be Bingo for Books on November 13.

Adult ESL will be starting again in November. We will begin reaching out to families later this month with details about when and where the classes will be held.

### Beginning of Year (BOY) Assessment

EL students are finishing their Beginning of Year Assessment. All 1-12 students who receive direct instruction from an ESL teacher will be using Summit K12. This assessment provides each student with an individualized learning plan to target their specific needs. This data is also used by teachers to help determine which language domains need to be focused on during the upcoming school year. The Multilingual Learner Department will be using this data to drive their instruction while focusing on increasing student discourse in their classes.

### New Member of the ML Department

We would like to welcome Paige Josti to the multilingual learner team. She has joined the staff at GMS as an ESL teacher. We are very excited to have her as a part of the team.

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*The Gardner Public School District does not discriminate due to race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, homelessness or limited English proficiency.*





# Gardner Public Schools

Courtney Dunn, *Grants & Communications Manager*

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## Grants & Communications Update to School Committee – October 14, 2025

### Grants

The district submitted the following grants in September:

- [FY26 Fund Code 311: Supporting Students' Social Emotional Learning, Behavioral & Mental Health, and Wellness Grant](#) to continue to support the development of SEL strategies within the MTSS system at all buildings. The district applied for \$36,760.
- [FY26 Fund Code 0199: Interpreter in the Education Setting Training Grant](#), to provide training to two bilingual staff to support administrators and families in meetings where interpretation is required. The district applied for \$5,200.

At this point, all FY25 non-multi-year grants that ended on June 30, 2025 or August 30, 2025 have been closed and accounted for.

### Communications

The district website is currently undergoing a refresh, as included in the contract between the city and Civic Plus. The district has been working with the Mayor's Office to approve design concepts and finalize the project scope. Updates to the site should be launched by the end of October.

### Other

All current GPS staff members have completed the Annual Mandatory Training modules as of 10/2/2025 with ongoing monitoring to ensure new staff complete the training, as required.

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# Gardner Public Schools

Joyce West, Director of Pupil Personnel Services

Tasha Gamble, Assistant Director of Pupil Personnel Services



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October 3, 2025

## **Report to the School Committee Pupil Services/Special Education Updates**

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (SEPAC):**

SEPAC's first meeting of the 2025-26 SY will be held on October 8th from 6:00-7:00 p.m. A flier is forthcoming. There will be elections held this fall to fill a vacant officer seat. Katie Donovan, Chair, is returning and hoping to secure an additional officer position.

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION:**

In September, the District began implementation of a district created template to support all teachers with planning for students with disabilities (SWD). The template is aligned to the new IEP format to support the continued development of all staff's knowledge on how to read and implement supports using the new IEP form. The template, "IEP Matrix", outlines all student accommodations for the teachers working with students in their classes. The goal of the matrix is to have an overview of the students and their accommodations to assist in planning classroom lessons. The special education teachers also use this template to pre-plan recommendations for teachers when they meet together to plan for lessons for the classroom.

The program evaluation of our pre-school program including the pre-school subseparate classroom is being conducted by ACCEPT Collaborative and started in September. Preliminary feedback has been helpful. We look forward to the completion of the evaluation and recommendations.

### **SEL/MENTAL HEALTH:**

This year the District is partnering with Thriving Minds which is an umbrella partnership between bryt, the Massachusetts School Mental Health Consortium (MASMHC), and the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy. The District reached out to partner with Thriving Minds to support the development of a comprehensive school mental health system within the district. To start the work all mental health providers have been provided with a survey designed to elicit feedback and to help better understand and strengthen Gardner's school mental health system. The survey focused on topics such as how interventions are implemented, how providers work together as teams, and how providers use data to inform decisions.