

## **Agenda School Committee Meeting 12.8.25**

### **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**

**Monday, December 8, 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 – John & Abigail Adams Recipients Class of 2026 (53 recipients)**
- D. **Consent Agenda**
  - a. Approval of Minutes: November 10, 2025
    - Warrant # 26-19, dated November 6, 2025, in the amount of \$170,510.57
    - Warrant # 26-20, dated November 13, 2025, in the amount of \$139,835.48
    - Warrant # 26-21, dated November 20, 2025, in the amount of \$268,644.06
    - Donations –
      - Shun Fa Lian, Inc. (DBA Yen Yen) \$2,500.00
- E. **Subcommittee Report**
  - Finance Subcommittee
  - Policy Subcommittee
- F. **Student Advisory Board - Aiden Lospennato & Natalie Ruiz**

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE  
GARDNER, MA

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## **Agenda School Committee Meeting 12.8.25**

### **G. Discussion Items:**

#### **New Business**

##### **Item #3737 First Reading of Policies (Information)**

**BGD** – School Committee Review of Procedures

**BHC** – School Committee – Staff Communications

**BIBA** – School Committee Conferences, Conventions, and Workshops

**CB** – School Superintendent

**CH** – Policy Implementation

**CHCA** – Approval of Handbooks and Directives

**CHD** - Administration in Policy Absence

**JBB** - Educational Equity

##### **Item #3738 Second Reading of Policies (Vote Required)**

**BDB** – School Committee Superintendent Relationship

**BDD** – School Committee – Superintendent Relationship

**BDFA** – School Council

**BEDG** - Minutes

**IGB** – Support Services Programs

**JLCD** – Administering Medication

The Policy Subcommittee recommends acceptance of the above policies

##### **Item #3739 BDBB – Duties of Vice Chair (For Removal - Vote Required)**

##### **BDBC – Duties of Secretary (For Removal - Vote Required)**

The following policies have been found, by the MASC, to be redundant or unnecessary and should be considered for removal from our policy manual

##### **Item #3740 School Improvement Plans (GHS & GA) (Presentation)**

##### **Item #3741 College & Career Readiness Coordinator Update (Information)**

##### **Item #3742 Curriculum Coordinator Update (Information)**

##### **Item #3743 Director of MTSS/PBIS Update (Information)**

##### **Item #3744 Grants Administrator Update (Information)**

##### **Item #3745 Special Education Update (Information)**

### **H. Communications**

### **I. Final Comments of School Committee**

### **J. Executive Session**

### **K. Next Meeting:**

**Meeting date for the future School Committee (Organizational) meeting;**

**Tuesday, January 6, 2026 @6:00PM**

### **L. Adjournment**

**GARDNER PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**BRIEFING**

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

Monday, December 8, 2025, 6:00 PM  
City Council Chambers, City Hall, Gardner, MA 01440

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  - Finance Subcommittee
  - Policy Subcommittee
- F. Student Advisory Board – Aiden Lospennato & Natalie Ruiz**
- G. Discussion Items:**
  - New Business**
    - Item #3737 First Reading of Policies (Information)**
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      - BHC** – School Committee – Staff Communications
      - BIBA** – School Committee Conferences, Conventions, and Workshops
      - CB** – School Superintendent
      - CH** – Policy Implementation
      - CHCA** – Approval of Handbooks and Directives
      - CHD** - Administration in Policy Absence
      - JBB** - Educational Equity
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      - BDB** – School Committee Superintendent Relationship
      - BDD** – School Committee – Superintendent Relationship
      - BDFA** – School Council
      - BEDG** - Minutes
      - IGB** – Support Services Programs

## **Briefing**

### **School Committee Meeting 12.08.2025**

#### **JLCD – Administering Medication**

The Policy Subcommittee recommends acceptance of the above policies

#### **Item #3739 BDBB – Duties of Vice Chair (For Removal - Vote Required)**

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#### **Item #3740 School Improvement Plans (GHS & GA) (Presentation)**

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#### **Item #3744 Grants Administrator Update (Information)**

#### **Item #3745 Special Education Update (Information)**

### **H. Communication**

### **I. Final Comments of School Committee**

### **J. Executive Session**

### **K. Next Meeting:**

**Meeting date for next School Committee (Organizational) meeting;**  
Tuesday, January 6, 2026 @6:00PM

### **L. Adjournment**

# **Gardner School Committee**

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

**Regular Meeting – November 10, 2025**

Members present: Mayor Michael Nicholson  
Rachel Cormier  
Anne Hurst  
John LaFreniere  
Jennifer Pelavin  
Robert Swartz

Member absent: Shannon Ward-Leighton

School Personnel Present: Dr. Mark Pellegrino, Superintendent  
Brenda Smith, Recording Secretary  
Mark Hawke, Director of Finance and Operations  
Becky McCaffrey, Director of School Health Services  
Bethany Harunkiewicz, District Nurse  
Benjamin Blake, District Nurse

## **Call to Order**

Mayor Nicholson, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. 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**

No one from the General Public requested to speak.

## **Recognitions by the Superintendent**

Dr. Pellegrino introduced Ms. Bethany Harunkiewicz and Mr. Benjamin Blake, Today I want to recognize two of our nurses. We recently had an event, a life or death event at Gardner High School. Nurses train for this and pray it never happens, unfortunately we did and these two responded really quickly to a call that made such a crisis situation turn out better than it could have. We can't thank them enough.

Mayor Nicholson declared a recess at 6:03 pm for a photo opportunity. The meeting resumed at 6:05 pm.

**Consent Agenda**

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

- **Acceptance of Minutes, October 14, 2025**
- **Acceptance of Grant Funds on Grant listing dated November 10, 2025 in the amount of \$44,910.00**
- **Ratification of the following Warrants as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee:**
  - Warrant # 26-15, dated October 9, 2025, in the amount of \$206,992.59
  - Warrant # 26-16, dated October 16, 2025, in the amount of \$263,460.63
  - Warrant # 26-17, dated October 23, 2025, in the amount of \$887,325.63
  - Warrant # 26-18, dated October 30, 2025, in the amount of \$409,814.25
  - Donations-

**Seconded by Mrs. Cormier.**

**Vote - so voted.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

**SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Facilities Subcommittee**

Mr. Swartz, Chairperson, reported that the Facilities Subcommittee met on November 6, 2025. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

Mr. Swartz shared the Kitchen equipment supply list Mr. Hawke presented as outdated to the district and asked for a motion to dispose of the 91 items. (list is in the committee's packet).

Mayor Nicholson asked if there are any objections to taking

**Item #3732 - Surplus of Equipment** out of order. There were no objections.

**Mr. Swartz moved that the District School Committee vote to declare the items presented by the Facilities Subcommittee as surplus. All items have been harvested for salvageable materials and are past their useful life.**

**Seconded by Mr. LaFreniere.**

**Vote – so voted.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

Mr. Swartz gave an update of facilities maintenance work orders open, on hold, and closed from August 28, 2025 thru November 3, 2025. Mr. Anderson also informed the committee a decision was made that the Assistant Principals are the only staff authorized to submit a maintenance work order. This will help cut down on numerous request.

**Finance Subcommittee**

Mr. LaFreniere, Chairperson, reported that the Finance Subcommittee met on November 6, 2025. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

The Subcommittee reviewed the year to date Expense Report. Mr. Hawke noted City Hall needs to transfer \$30k for Athletic Director/Recreation Director salary, we share that salary with the

city. The PPS Secretary line shows a negative because the secretary was out for a while and a substitute was brought in for coverage, this was not anticipated or budgeted. A few other accounts in the negative with some transfers still to be made.

Punch list items continue to be closed out with regard to the GHS Auditorium and paperwork continues to flow to the MSBA for the GMS roof project.

**Policy Subcommittee**

Mrs. Hurst, Chair of the Policy Subcommittee, reported that the Subcommittee met on October 15, 2025. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

The following policies were reviewed and no changes were required and they will be updated "Reviewed October 2025":

- BDF – Advisory Committees to the School Committee
- BEDD – Rules of Order

Six policies were recommended to the full School Committee for a first reading. See (Item #3729 on Agenda) – Four Policies for second read and one for removal. Item# 3731 BDFA-E-1 will be removed from the policy manual and placed in the procedures manual.

**Student Advisory Board**

Ms. Natalie Ruiz & Mr. Aiden Lospennato was not present this evening and there was no report.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Item #3729 – First Reading of Policies**

**The following policies were presented for a first read as recommended by the Policy Subcommittee:**

- **BDB** – School Committee Superintendent Relationship
- **BDD** – School Committee – Superintendent Relationship
- **BDFA** – School Council
- **BEDG** - Minutes
- **IGB** – Support Services Programs
- **JLCD** – Administering Medication

**Item #3730 – Second Reading of Policies**

**Mrs. Hurst moved that the District School Committee vote to approve the following policies for a second reading as recommended by the Policy Subcommittee:**

- **DB** – Annual Budget
- **DBG** – Budget Adoption Procedures
- **EFD** – School Nutrition Program Charge Policy
- **JIC** – Student Discipline

**Seconded by Mrs. Cormier.**

**Vote - so voted.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

**#3731 BDFA-E-1 – School Improvement Plan**

**Mrs. Hurst moved that the District School Committee vote to remove the following policy from the Policy manual and placed in the procedures manual as it is a procedure not a policy.**

- **BDFA-E-1 School Improvement Plan**

**Seconded by Mrs. Cormier.**

**Vote - so voted.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

**Item #3733 – Curriculum Coordinator’s Update**

The Curriculum Coordinator’s Update was included in the members' packets. Ms. Catherine Goguen, Chief Academic Officer, was not present this evening.

Dr. Pellegrino gave her updated PowerPoint on MCAS 2025. A copy is included in the members’ packet. Dr. Pellegrino provided charts showing the improvement and progress being made. He outlined Action Steps that will be taken.

**Item #3734 – Director of School Health Services Update**

The School Health Services Update was included in the members' packets. Ms. Rebecca McCaffrey, Director of School Health Services, was present this evening.

**Item #3735 - Grants Administrator Update**

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

**Item #3736 - Special Education Update**

The Special Education Update Report was included in the members’ packets. Ms. Joyce West, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, was not present this evening.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Dr. Pellegrino thanked the School Committee for support over the years. At Gardner Middle School things are starting to improve already, with eighteen new staff with a new principal the staff is really optimistic. It’s very exciting. As with our Nursing staff how well they responded to the crises. This year is already going by so quickly.

**FINAL COMMENTS**

**Mrs. Hurst** Congratulations to the Mayor on the Election and everyone else who ran.

**Mrs. Pelavin** Reminder tomorrow is Veterans Day so I wanted to express my appreciation and gratitude for all that have served. Good luck to the Boys Soccer team in the Elite 8 matchup. They play on Wednesday at 2:00.



**Mr. Swartz** We are down a nurse, was concerned if we posted for a new one. Important part of our emergency response in place. Mr. Swartz shared his feelings on the election that everyone should exercise their privilege and go out to vote.

**Mrs. Cormier** Happy to see an increase of family engagement the past month. All begins with our leaders, thank you.

**Mayor Nicholson** Good luck to the soccer team and congratulations to all the sports teams for making it to playoffs. Congratulations to the GHS band winning a silver medal performance at the State finals.

Congratulations on the Election of four years to Mrs. Hurst, Mr. Cormier, & Mrs. Pelavin.

Update on City Hall elevator that's out of order. Elevator is stuck the parts have been ordered and we hope to have the parts in soon and the elevator up and running. Sorry for any inconvenience.

Pearl Street is set to be paved on Saturday the 15th, rain date Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup>. Thank you for your patients.

The Next meeting will take place on Monday, December 8, 2025 6:00PM

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Ms. Hurst moved to adjourn.**

**Seconded by Mr. LaFreniere.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

**Vote – so voted.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:37 pm

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**Anne Hurst, Secretary**

B. Smith, Recording Secretary

**GARDNER PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SYNOPSIS OF WARRANT**

**WARRANT #: 26-19**

**WARRANT DATE**    11/06/25

Location	Custodial Supplies	Curriculum	Salary pd thru Vendor	IT	Athletics	Prof Dev	Facilities	Utilities	TOTAL
High School		\$576.84					\$34,864.08	\$ 5,272.27	\$40,713.19
Middle School	\$2,399.46	\$60.00					\$24,865.54	\$ 2,482.10	\$29,807.10
Gardner Elementary School		\$2,367.00				\$100.00	\$51,455.62	\$ 4,089.06	\$58,011.68
GALT	\$344.31						\$3,308.59	\$ 1,543.55	\$5,196.45
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$2,743.77</b>	<b>\$3,003.84</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$100.00</b>	<b>\$114,493.83</b>	<b>\$13,386.98</b>	<b>\$133,728.42</b>

Location	General Supplies	Curriculum	Transportation	Prof Dev	IT	Prof Services	Utilities	Facilities	Carry Forward	TOTAL
Special Education										\$0.00
Administration	\$65.81	\$1,140.00			\$9,609.55		\$1,543.56	\$3,308.59	\$7,929.50	\$23,597.01
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$65.81</b>	<b>\$1,140.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$9,609.55</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$1,543.56</b>	<b>\$3,308.59</b>	<b>\$7,929.50</b>	<b>\$23,597.01</b>

Revolving	\$12,507.14
Grants	\$678.00
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$13,185.14</b>

<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$170,510.57</b>
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**GARDNER PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SYNOPSIS OF WARRANT**

**WARRANT #: 26-20**

**WARRANT DATE**    11/13/25

Location	Custodial Supplies	Curriculum	Salary pd thru Vendor	IT	Athletics	Field Trip	Facilities	Utilities	TOTAL
High School	\$149.75			\$340.00	\$876.00	\$2,125.00		\$ 1,623.48	\$5,114.23
Middle School			\$2,610.00				\$945.58	\$ 1,145.95	\$4,701.53
Gardner Elementary School	\$149.44	\$191.92							\$341.36
GALT								\$ 746.31	\$746.31
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$299.19</b>	<b>\$191.92</b>	<b>\$2,610.00</b>	<b>\$340.00</b>	<b>\$876.00</b>	<b>\$2,125.00</b>	<b>\$945.58</b>	<b>\$3,515.74</b>	<b>\$10,903.43</b>

Location	General Supplies	Curriculum	Transportation	Speech/OCC	IT	Prof Services	Utilities	Facilities	Carry Forward	TOTAL
Special Education				\$2,517.82		\$2,833.75				\$5,351.57
Administration			\$100,957.50				\$746.31	\$3,013.09		\$104,716.90
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$100,957.50</b>	<b>\$2,517.82</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$2,833.75</b>	<b>\$746.31</b>	<b>\$3,013.09</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$110,068.47</b>

Revolving	\$5,555.48
Grants	\$13,308.10
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$18,863.58</b>

<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$139,835.48</b>
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**GARDNER PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SYNOPSIS OF WARRANT**

**WARRANT #: 26-21**

**WARRANT DATE**    11/20/25

Location	Custodial Supplies	Curriculum	Salary pd thru Vendor	IT	Athletics	Field Trip	Facilities	Utilities	TOTAL
High School	\$799.80					\$338.00			\$1,137.80
Middle School	\$554.85		\$3,262.50				\$1,125.46		\$4,942.81
Gardner Elementary School									\$0.00
GALT									\$0.00
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$1,354.65</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$3,262.50</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$338.00</b>	<b>\$1,125.46</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$6,080.61</b>

Location	General Supplies	Curriculum	Transportation	Speech/OCC	IT	Prof Services	Tuition	Facilities	Carry Forward	TOTAL
Special Education			\$59,885.85	\$5,064.24		\$23,928.00	\$57,475.87			\$146,353.96
Administration		\$628.95			\$4,628.41				\$10,000.00	\$15,257.36
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$628.95</b>	<b>\$59,885.85</b>	<b>\$5,064.24</b>	<b>\$4,628.41</b>	<b>\$23,928.00</b>	<b>\$57,475.87</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$10,000.00</b>	<b>\$161,611.32</b>

Revolving	\$503.00
Grants	\$90,167.13
GHS LOCKER ROOM	\$10,282.00
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$100,952.13</b>

<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$268,644.06</b>
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# **GARDNER PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Policy  
Subcommittee  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, November 19, 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;

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

A motion was made by Ms. Ward and seconded by Mrs. Cormier to approve the minutes of the October 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 November 2025":

- BID – School Committee Member Compensation
- CFA – School Building Administrative Coverage
- CL – Administrative Reports

Policy IJOA – Field Trips and IJOA-E – Field Trip Approval Form were tabled to the December Policy Subcommittee Meeting for further review and discussion.

Policy BGD – School Committee Review of Procedures was reviewed and discussed. The Subcommittee recommended removal of the “Note” and removal of dates related to the source of the policy, consistent with the format of other policy source information. A motion was made by Mrs. Cormier and seconded by Ms. Ward to send the Policy with the recommended changes to the December full School Committee Meeting for a first read. The motion passed unanimously.

Policy BHC – School Committee – Staff Communications was reviewed and discussed. The Subcommittee recommended adding language to the first section of the policy stating that communication from School Committee will be through the Superintendent. A motion was made by Ms. Ward and seconded by Mrs. Cormier to send the policy with the recommended changes to the December full School Committee Meeting for a first read. The

motion passed unanimously.

Policy BIBA – School Committee Conferences, Conventions, and Workshops was reviewed and discussed. The Subcommittee recommended removal of dates related to the source of the policy, consistent with the format of other policy source information. A motion was made by Mrs. Cormier and seconded by Ms. Ward to send the policy with the recommended changes to the December full School Committee Meeting for a first read. The motion passed unanimously.

Policy CB – School Superintendent was reviewed and discussed. The Subcommittee recommended adding language from MASC Policy CBD regarding the Superintendent Contract to Policy CB in lieu of adding a new Policy CBD to the District Policy Manual. A motion was made by Mrs. Cormier and seconded by Ms. Ward to send the policy with the recommended changes to the December full School Committee Meeting for a first read. The motion passed unanimously.

Policy CH – Policy Implementation was reviewed and discussed. The Subcommittee recommended the addition of the source to the policy. A motion was made by Ms. Ward and seconded by Mrs. Cormier to send the policy with the recommended changes to the December full School Committee Meeting for a first read. The motion passed unanimously.

Policy CHCA – Approval of Handbooks and Directives was reviewed and discussed. The Subcommittee recommended the addition of the source to the policy. A motion was made by Ms. Ward and seconded by Mrs. Cormier to send the policy with the recommended changes to the December full School Committee Meeting for a first read. The motion passed unanimously.

Policy CHD – Administration in Policy Absence was reviewed and discussed. The Subcommittee recommended the addition of the source to the policy. A motion was made by Mrs. Cormier and seconded by Ms. Ward to send the policy with the recommended changes to the December full School Committee Meeting for a first read. The motion passed unanimously.

Policy DB – Annual Budget was placed on the agenda in error. No discussion necessary

Policy JBB – Educational Equity was reviewed and discussed. Dr. Goguen presented changes as required by Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) civil rights policy expectations. A motion was made by Ms. Ward and seconded by Mrs. Cormier to send the policy with the recommended changes to the December full School Committee Meeting for a first read. The motion passed unanimously.

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

- 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 5:03 p.m.

## SCHOOL COMMITTEE REVIEW OF PROCEDURES

It is expected that the Superintendent and administrative staff will need to issue procedures implementing policies of the School Committee. Many of these will be routine from year to year; others will arise in special circumstances; some will be drawn up under specific directions from the Committee.

The Committee may review the procedures developed by the Superintendent for the school district whenever they appear inconsistent with policy, goals, or objectives of the District, but it will revise or veto such procedures only when, in the Committee's judgment, they are inconsistent with policies adopted by the Committee.

The Committee will not officially approve procedures except as required by state law or in cases when strong community attitudes, or possible student or staff reaction, make it necessary or advisable for a procedure to have the Committee's advance approval.

### Rules Pertaining to Staff and Student Conduct

Under Massachusetts law, the Superintendent is required to publish "rules and regulations pertaining to the conduct of teachers and students which have been adopted." Codes of discipline, as well as procedures used to develop such codes, shall be filed with the Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education for information purposes only. Standards of conduct will be included in staff and student handbooks. These handbooks will be reviewed and approved annually by the School Committee.

SOURCE: MASC ~~Reviewed 2022~~

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L. [71:37H](#)

~~**NOTE: It is important to point out that a School Committee is required to approve many regulations -- either by law (one example is cited above) or the dictates of good judgment.**~~

[Adopted: May 2023]

[Revised: 2026]



## SCHOOL COMMITTEE – STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

The Gardner School Committee wishes to maintain open channels of communication between itself and the staff. The main line of communication will, however, be through the Superintendent.

### Staff Communications to the School Committee

All communications or reports to the Committee or any of its subcommittees from principals, supervisors, teachers, or other staff members will be submitted through the Superintendent. This procedure does not deny the right of any employee to appeal to the Committee for administrative decisions on important matters, except those matters that are outside of the Committee's legal authority, provided the Superintendent has been notified of the forthcoming appeal and that it is processed in accordance with the Committee's policy on complaints and grievances. Staff members are also reminded that Committee meetings are public meetings. As such, they provide an excellent opportunity to observe first-hand the Committee's deliberations on problems of staff concern.

### School Committee Communications to Staff

All official communications, policies, and directives of staff interest and concern will be communicated to staff members through the Superintendent. The Superintendent will develop appropriate methods to keep staff fully informed of the Committee's concerns, and actions.

### Visits to Schools

Individual School Committee members interested in visiting schools or classrooms will inform the Superintendent of such visits and make arrangements for visitations through the principals of the various schools. Such visits will be regarded as informal expressions of interest in school affairs and not as "inspections" or visits for supervisory or administrative purposes. Official visits by Committee members will be carried on only under Committee authorization.

Source: MASC

[Adopted: April 2003]

[Revised: September 2012]

[Revised: May 2018]

[Revised: June 2019]

[Reviewed: March 2023]

[Revised: 2026]

## SCHOOL COMMITTEE CONFERENCES, CONVENTIONS, AND WORKSHOPS

To provide continuing in-service training and development for its members, the School Committee encourages the participation of all members at appropriate School Committee conferences, workshops and conventions. However, in order to control both the investment of time and funds necessary to implement this policy, the Committee establishes these principles and procedures for its guidance:

1. The School Committee shall be made aware of School Committee conferences, conventions and workshops. The Committee will periodically decide which meetings appear to be most promising in terms of producing direct and indirect benefits to the school district.
2. Funds for participation at such meetings will be budgeted for on an annual basis. When funds are limited, the Committee will designate which of its members would be the most appropriate to participate at a given meeting.
3. Reimbursement to Committee members for their travel expenses will be in accordance with the expense reimbursements policy.
4. When a conference, convention, or workshop is not attended by the full Committee, those who do participate will be requested to share information, recommendations and materials acquired at the meeting.

SOURCE: MASC ~~July 2016~~

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. [40:5](#)

CROSS REFS.: [BID](#), School Committee Member Compensation and Expenses

[DKC](#), Expense Reimbursements

[Adopted: April 2020]

[Reviewed: March 2023]

[Revised: 2026]

## **SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT**

The Committee shall employ a Superintendent of Schools and ~~fix-set~~ their compensation. The Committee, upon the appointment of a candidate to be Superintendent, will enter into a written contract with the Superintendent that will meet the requirements of law and protect the rights of both the Committee and the Superintendent. In accordance with said contract or, in the absence of specific contract language, by vote of the members, the Committee may choose to negotiate a successor contract with an incumbent Superintendent.

The Superintendent shall act in accordance with Mass. General Laws and shall perform such other duties consistent with this section as the Committee may determine. They shall also prepare such reports as may be required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and shall submit materials for the Committee's annual report to the (Mayor) Select Board in sufficient time for printing in the annual report.

SOURCE: MASC

LEGAL REFS: M.G.L. 71:59, 72:3

[Revised: March 2002]

[Reviewed: January 2006]

[Revised: February 2019]

[Revised: April 2023]

[Revised: September 2025]

[Revised: 2025]

## POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The superintendent has responsibility for carrying out, through regulations, the policies established by the school committee.

The policies developed by the committee and the regulations developed to implement policy are designed to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the school system. Consequently, it is expected that all school district employees and students will carry them out.

Administrators and supervisors are responsible for informing staff members in their schools or departments of existing policies and regulations and for seeing that they are implemented in the spirit intended.

Source: MASC

[Adopted: March 1999]

[Revised: March 2002]

[Reviewed: January 2019]

[Reviewed: March 2023]

[Revised: 2026]

## APPROVAL OF HANDBOOKS AND DIRECTIVES

Massachusetts General Law 71:37H directs that in each school building containing the grades nine through twelve, inclusive, the principal, in consultation with the school council, shall prepare and distribute to each student a handbook setting forth the rules pertaining to conduct of students. The school council shall review the handbook each spring to consider changes in the disciplinary policy to take effect in September.

It is essential that the contents of all handbooks conform to school committee policies. It is also important that all handbooks bearing the name of the school system or one of its schools be of a quality that reflects credit on the school department. Therefore, the committee expects all handbooks to be approved prior to publication by the committee and/or the superintendent.

Committee approval will be necessary for any handbooks that pertain to required standards of conduct for employees or students so that their contents may be accorded the status of committee-approved policy or regulation. The superintendent will use his/her judgment as to whether other specific handbooks need committee approval; however, all handbooks published will be made available to the committee for informational purposes.

See File CHCA-E, Approval of Handbooks and Directives, for procedures.

Source: MASC

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

[Adopted: June 1998]

[Reviewed: March 2002]

[Revised: March 2019]

[Revised: 2026]

## ADMINISTRATION IN POLICY ABSENCE

When action must be taken within the school system where the committee has provided no guidance for administrative action, the superintendent will have the power to act. The superintendent's decisions, however, will be subject to review by the committee.

Source: MASC

[Adopted: June 1998]

[Reviewed: March 2002]

[Revised: March 2019]

[Reviewed: April 2023]

[Revised: 2026]

## EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

The School Committee's goal is to strive to address the needs of every student in each of our schools, subject to budgetary, space and other limitations.

Educational equity for the purpose of this policy is defined as providing all students, as reasonably practical, the high quality instruction and support they need to reach and exceed a common standard.

To achieve educational equity, the district will commit to:

1. ~~1. Conduct an annual evaluation of all aspects of the K-12 school program to ensure that all students, regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, limited English proficiency, sexual orientation, disability, or housing status, have equal access to all programs, including athletics and other extracurricular activities.~~
2. ~~2. Systematically, when appropriate, u~~Use districtwide and individual school level data, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender/gender identity, national origin, language, special education, socioeconomic status and mobility to inform district decision making.
2. Raise the achievement of all students.
3. Graduate all students ready to succeed in a diverse local, national and global community.

In order to reach the goal of educational equity, as reasonably practical, for each and every student, the District shall:

1. Provide every student with access to high quality curriculum, support, and other educational resources.
2. Seek to promote educational equity as a priority in professional development.
3. Endeavor to create schools with a welcoming and inclusive culture and environment.
4. Provide multiple pathways to success in order to meet the needs of the diverse student body and actively encourage, support and expect high academic achievement for each student.

The Superintendent shall include equity practices in the district's strategic plan and goal strategies to implement this policy. The Superintendent, upon request, will periodically report to the Committee the progress of the implementation of this policy.

SOURCE: MASC

ADOPTED: September 12, 2019

[Adopted: April 2020]

[Revised: 2025]

File: BDB

## SCHOOL COMMITTEE OFFICERS

### Chairperson

The mayor of the city will serve as chairperson of the school committee.

The chairperson shall preside at all meetings. The chairperson shall be responsible for chairing each meeting in accordance with Roberts' Rules of Order, Massachusetts General Law, and school committee protocol.

### Rules regarding Chairs Participation in Voting and/or Debate

The Chair has the right to vote when the vote is by ballot or when their vote would change the outcome. The Chairs right to vote is an option. They are not under obligation to exercise it in any case.

The Chair cannot take part in debate or interrupt members who are not violating a rule. Therefore, the Chairman must not comment on motions during the debate unless they first vacate the Chair. They should not return to the Chair until the main motion is completed.

The Chairperson shall have authority to sign contracts and other instruments approved by the committee in its name and behalf, and shall have such powers and duties as the committee may from time to time determine.

### Other Officers

Other officers shall consist of a vice-chairperson, secretary, finance officer and two alternate finance officers.

When the vice chairperson is elected, the vice chairperson shall solicit written interest from all school committee members relative to all non-elected subcommittees. The vice chairperson shall then appoint, prior to the February meeting, members to the following subcommittees and Athletic Council. Additional subcommittees may be named on an ad hoc basis as required. School Committee members shall be appointed thereto by the Vice-Chairperson of the School Committee. The Vice-Chairperson of the School Committee shall appoint the chairperson of each standing and ad hoc subcommittee.

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The vice-chairperson shall preside at all meetings whenever the chairperson is absent, or when requested to take the chair by the chairperson. The vice-chairperson shall perform all the duties of the chairperson in the absence of the chairperson.

The secretary is elected annually by the committee at the first meeting in January.

The secretary shall oversee the development and maintenance of a permanent record book, in which all the school committee votes, orders and proceedings shall be recorded. The secretary shall sign documents, diplomas and correspondence requiring the signature of the committee's



File: BDB

secretary. In the absence of the secretary at any meeting, the committee shall elect a secretary pro tem.

The secretary shall preside at all meetings whenever the chairperson and vice-chairperson are absent, or when requested to take the chair by the vice-chairperson who is presiding over a meeting. The secretary shall perform all the duties of the vice-chairperson in the absence of the vice-chairperson. In the absence of the secretary at any meeting, the committee shall elect a secretary pro tem.

The finance officer is elected annually by the full committee at the first meeting in January.

The finance officer shall approve all payroll warrants. In the absence of the finance officer these duties shall be performed by one of two of the alternate finance officers.

The finance officer shall also serve as chair of the finance subcommittee.

SOURCE: MASC ~~Reviewed 2022~~

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L. 71:36

[References: Rules of the School Committee, 12/3/59]

[Revised: 3/13/00]

[Revised: March 2008]

[Reviewed: April 2017]

[Reviewed: May 2017]

[Reviewed: September 2020]

[Reviewed: November 2020]

[Revised: June 2025]

[Revised: 2025]

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE – SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONSHIP**

The Committee will leave to the Superintendent all matters of decision and administration that come within their scope as executive officer or as professional leader of the school district. While the Committee reserves to itself the ultimate decision of all matters concerning general policy or expenditures of funds, it will normally proceed in these areas after receiving recommendations from its executive officer. Further:

1. The Superintendent may seek guidance from the Committee with respect to matters of operation whenever appropriate. If it is necessary to make exceptions to an established policy, they will submit the matter to the Committee for advice and direction.
2. The Superintendent will assist the Committee in reaching sound judgments and establishing policies, and will place before the Committee all relevant facts, information, and reports necessary to keep the Committee adequately informed of situations or business at hand.

SOURCE: MASC ~~July 2016~~

[Reviewed: November 2003]

[Reviewed: May 2017]

[Revised: December 2020]

[Reviewed: February 2023]

[Revised: 2025]

## SCHOOL COUNCILS

The School Committee believes that the school is the key unit for educational improvement and change and that successful school improvement is best accomplished through a school-based decision-making process. By involving those directly affected by any action or decision of the school council in the process of determining that action or decision, it helps to strengthen the commitment to those decisions by those most affected by its implementation.

Under this policy, the Principal shall have primary responsibility for the management of the school. Decisions which are made at the school level must be aligned with the budget, policies, curriculum, and long-range and short-range goals adopted by the School Committee. In addition, decisions must comply with any state and federal laws and regulations and with any negotiated agreements of the school.

As enacted by the state legislature in the Education Reform Act of 1993, a school council shall be established in each school to advise the Principal in specific areas of school operation. The Principal, except as specifically defined in the law, shall have the responsibility for defining the composition of and forming the group pursuant to a representative process approved by the Superintendent and School Committee.

The Principal shall, by law, serve as co-chair of the council. The second co-chair will be elected annually by the council members at its first meeting of the school year subsequent to the elections of new council members. The co-chairs will be responsible for the preparation of the agenda for the council meetings.

The school council shall meet at least once monthly during the school year. Meetings will be held outside of school hours.

School councils shall use consensus as the primary method to resolve issues and to formulate recommendations. Votes by majority may be taken at the discretion of the Principal and Robert's Rules of Order.

All meetings of the school council shall conform to the Open Meeting Law. The scope of the school council does not require, and therefore does not qualify for, executive session.

The Superintendent shall receive agendas and minutes of all school council meetings. The Superintendent shall provide copies of these materials to members of the School Committee upon request.

The following guidelines define the role of the school council: The School Council shall meet regularly with the Principal of the school and shall assist in:

1. Adoption of educational goals for the school that are consistent with state and local policies and standards.
2. Identification of the educational needs of the students attending the school.
3. Review of the school building budget.
4. Formulation of a school improvement plan that may be implemented only after review and approval by the Superintendent.

Source: MASC —~~Consolidated and Updated 2022~~

[Reference: M.G.L. 71:38Q, 59C, C30A, 18-25]

[Approved: March 1999]

[Reviewed: December 2001]

[Revised: April 2005]

[Revised: November 2011]

[Reviewed: November 2017]

[Revised: December 2020]

[Revised: March 2023]

[Revised: 2025]

## MINUTES

The minutes of a School Committee meeting constitute the written record of Committee actions; they are legal evidence of what the action was. Therefore, the secretary of the School Committee will be responsible for reporting in the minutes all actions taken by the Committee.

Minutes will include:

1. The date, time, place, the members present or absent, annotated as to arrival and departure times, if during the meeting, a summary of each subject, and a list of documents and exhibits used at the meeting,
2. A complete record of official actions taken by the Committee relative to the Superintendent's recommendations, to communications, and to all business transacted. Resolutions and motions will be given in their exact wording, accompanied by the names of members moving and seconding and a record of the results of the vote. Reports and documents relating to a formal motion may be omitted if they are referred to and identified by title and date.
3. Notation of formal adjournment.

Copies of the minutes will be sent to all Committee members at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting at which the minutes are to be approved. Minutes of all meetings shall be created and approved in a timely manner which is defined in regulation as within the next 3 meetings of the body or within 30 days, whichever is later.

The approved minutes will become permanent records of the Committee. Minutes of public meetings and minutes of executive sessions that have been declassified will be in the custody of the Superintendent who will make them available to interested citizens upon request.

SOURCE: MASC, ~~July 2018~~

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. [30A:22](#); [66:10](#); 940 CMR 29.00

CROSS REF.: [KDB](#), Public's Right to Know; BEC, Executive Session

[Reviewed: January 2002]

[Revised: December 2011]

[Reviewed: November 2017]

[Revised: December 2020]

[Reviewed: February 2023]

[\[Revised: 2025\]](#)

## **SUPPORT SERVICES PROGRAMS**

The Student Services staff will work in cooperation with District building staff and administration to coordinate and supervise the implementation of curriculum, the instructional program, and support services to meet the needs of all students.

The *Chief Academic Officer & Director of Pupil Personnel Services* shall be responsible for all services for students who are not eligible for special education assistance, such as psychological services, speech correction, homebound and hospital teaching and such other programs as may be assigned.

SOURCE: MASC ~~April 2019~~

CROSS REF.: [ACE](#), Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability

[Adopted: August 2020]

[Reviewed: December 2023]

[Revised: 2025]

## ADMINISTERING MEDICATION TO STUDENTS

Medication may not be administered to students while at school unless such medicine is given to them by the school nurse acting under specific written request of the parent or guardian and under the written order of a licensed prescriber (see below for exceptions). When appropriate, the school nurse may, with parent and student consent, develop a medication administration plan that allows the student to self-administer prescription medication. The school nurse will follow the Self Administration of Prescription Medications guidelines from the MA Department of Public Health in determining if this is appropriate.

### Exceptions:

The school district shall, through the District Nurse Leader, register with the Department of Public Health to obtain a Massachusetts Controlled Substance Registration (MCSR), delegate the administration of medications to unlicensed personnel, and train unlicensed staff in the administration of Epinephrine and Narcan, ~~in the case of a known allergen exposure~~. Training of unlicensed staff is done by the school nurse in accordance with Department of Public Health guidelines.

~~The school district, in conjunction with the School Physician and the Director of School Health Services, stock nasal naloxone (Narcan) and epinephrine. Only trained medical personnel may administer stock nasal naloxone and stock epinephrine to individuals. Unlicensed personnel may administer naloxone and epinephrine that is prescribed to a particular student after being trained by the school nurse.~~

~~In the event such as a field trip where the school nurse is not available, a trained staff member may administer a scheduled dose of medicine to a student as long as the parent consents. This provision only applies when the correct dosage of the medication to be administered by the staff has been placed in an individual pharmacy labeled container clearly marked with the student's name, the dosage to be administered, and the time which the medicine is to be taken. In addition, the student must be able to recognize the medicine that he or she is taking. No one but the school nurse, and those others listed in the medical administration plan acting within the above restriction may give any medication to any student.~~

~~All prescription medications are kept locked up in the health office with the following exceptions:~~

~~Following consultation with the school nurse, students with the following medical conditions may possess on themselves and self-administer the following medications:-~~

- ~~1. Students with asthma or other respiratory diseases may possess and administer prescription inhalers.~~
- ~~2. Students with cystic fibrosis may possess and administer prescription enzyme supplements.~~
- ~~3. Students with diabetes may possess and administer glucose monitoring equipment, insulin and diabetic supplies.~~
- ~~1. Students with life-threatening allergies may possess and administer epinephrine.~~

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When agreed upon by the School Nurse, Parent/Guardian, and Student, a Medication Administration Plan for Self Administration of medications can be considered.

4.

[Reference: M.G.L. 54B Dept. of Public Health Regulations: 105 CMR 210.00]

[Adopted: November 1998]

[Reviewed: September 2003]

[Revised: June 2008]

[Revised: October 2015]

[Revised: April 2020]

[Revised: February 2025]

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## DUTIES OF VICE-CHAIRPERSON

The vice-chairperson shall preside at all meetings whenever the chairperson is absent, or when requested to take the chair by the chairperson. The vice-chairperson shall perform all the duties of the chairperson in the absence of the chairperson.

When the vice chairperson is elected, the vice chairperson shall solicit written interest from all school committee members relative to all non-elected subcommittees. The vice chairperson shall then appoint, prior to the February meeting, members to the following subcommittees and Athletic Council:

1. Facilities
2. Policy
3. Technology
4. GEA Negotiations
5. 1717 Negotiations
6. ESP Negotiations
7. Coaches' Negotiations
8. Superintendent Evaluation
9. Transportation

Additional subcommittees may be named on an ad hoc basis as required. School Committee members shall be appointed thereto by the Vice-Chairperson of the School Committee.

The Vice-Chairperson of the School Committee shall appoint the chairperson of each standing and ad hoc subcommittee.

[Revised: October 2003]

[Revised: March 2008]

[Reviewed: April 2017]

[Reviewed: November 2017]

[Reviewed: September 2020]

[Revised: March 2023]

## **DUTIES OF SECRETARY**

The secretary is elected annually by the committee at the first meeting in January.

The secretary shall oversee the development and maintenance of a permanent record book, in which all the school committee votes, orders and proceedings shall be recorded. The secretary shall sign documents diplomas and correspondence requiring the signature of the committee's secretary. In the absence of the secretary at any meeting, the committee shall elect a secretary pro tem.

[Reference: General Laws of Massachusetts, Chap. 71, §36]

[Revised: October 2003]

[Revised: March 2008]

[Reviewed: April 2017]

[Reviewed: May 2017]

[Reviewed: September 2020]

[Reviewed: February 2023]

## Gardner High School School Improvement Plan 2024-2027

### Mission

Gardner High School provides an enriched academic environment fostered through relevance, rigor and relationships and ensures that each student learns at a high level. In the classroom, we challenge all students in a supportive, positive environment that promotes scholarship and helps students develop the skills and characteristics to make them successful for their future. On the field, stage, or court, we create fun, engaging opportunities for students to excel in athletics, the arts, and co-curricular groups. We promote personal development and a sense of service to our community.

### Core Values

Our Core Values (C.A.R.E.) are:

**Community** - We work together to achieve for all in a culture steeped in tradition;

**Appreciation** - We accept our roles, respect different perspectives, and acknowledge the good in others;

**Responsibility** - We own our actions and honor our commitments by being prepared, involved community members; and

**Excellence** - We do our best and take pride in all we do in our community.

### Vision

**We will be the premier school of choice for our students and their families.**

**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.
- Our school 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 will be done through a restorative approach.

***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 school will monitor and adapt its instruction to ensure students learn the skills and knowledge to prepare them for their own future.

### Theory of Action

*If we:*

- **Create** a clear set of expectations and strategies that are shared across every classroom to assess, monitor, and utilize academic, behavioral and social emotional data to inform our instruction and interventions,
- **Then** there will be continuity of practices across all classrooms and grade levels where the same high level of rigorous instruction is provided to all students, which is aligned with objectives and state standards.
- **And**, if we implement challenging learning activities and differentiated instructional strategies that support students' academic, behavioral and social emotional growth while developing positive relationships,
- **Then** students will develop higher order thinking skills, and the ability to articulate their thinking, while utilizing appropriately challenging resources.
- **And**, if we work in collaboration with families and community partners to engage in shared decision making for effective educational programming while giving all students equitable access and opportunities to achieve at their highest level,
- **Then** students will become lifelong, collaborative, problem solvers who positively contribute to the workforce and their community.

### Strategic Objectives

Academic:	Behavioral:	Social Emotional Learning:	Collaboration with Families and Community Partners:
Create and implement a standards-aligned curriculum across all grades and disciplines utilizing data to inform instruction, lessons and interventions while supporting equity:	Create and implement clear expectations and strategies across all grades utilizing data to inform behavioral supports and interventions while supporting equity:	Utilize data to inform social emotional interventions and provide tiered supports to all students while supporting equity:	Collaborate with families and community partners to engage in shared decision-making for effective educational programming while supporting equity:

### Action Steps

Comprehensive professional development for staff and common planning time based on an MTSS tiered approach	Comprehensive professional development for staff based on an MTSS tiered approach	Comprehensive professional development for staff based on an MTSS tiered approach	Produce and administer student, staff, and parent feedback surveys
Create a school-wide written curriculum in a common format by department and subject area that is aligned with state standards and that is reviewed regularly	Develop, utilize and enforce a system of school-wide behavioral expectations	Monitor social-emotional data and through an MTSS approach and incorporate appropriate tiered interventions accordingly	Regularly utilize Gardner High School website page, digital newsletters and social media to share information, activities and achievements

Develop and incorporate rigorous and engaging instruction and lessons aligned with state standards and MCAS specific questions	Monitor discipline data, and through our MTSS system, incorporate appropriate interventions and progressive discipline accordingly	Incorporate an SEL curriculum into our Advisory period, which addresses students' social emotional needs	Maintain School Council meetings and voice for parent/community concerns and feedback
Monitor academic data that will drive future instruction, assessments (formative and summative) and interventions	Create and maintain a restorative approach to discipline with empathetic personal interactions which supports student behavioral growth		Further develop and expand our Early College and vocational programming.
Utilize teacher observation and evaluation system as well as the rigor rubric and the classroom instructional checks rubric to gather learning walk data for analysis and sharing to improve instructional outcomes			

### Outcomes

- 1) Teachers in classrooms will incorporate Tier 1 academic, behavioral and social-emotional interventions with 80% fidelity
- 2) 100% of the teachers will regularly review school-wide expectations with their students multiple times a year and have school-wide and classroom expectations posted in their classrooms
- 3) 80% of students in need of Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports will meet progress targets
- 4) GHS will eliminate discipline disparities for all subgroups
- 5) GHS will eliminate attendance disparities for all subgroups
- 6) Students with disabilities and multi-lingual learners will have an increase of 10% meeting or exceeding on MCAS
- 7) All subgroups will meet MCAS targets in ELA, math and science
- 8) A minimum of 50% of seniors graduating from GHS will be enrolled in either our Early College Program or vocational offerings through the MWCC Autotech Program, the MWCC CNA Program, the MT MVP Program, our Manufacturing Program, or other developed vocational programs
- 9) Drop-out rates for all subgroups will be no higher than the aggregate
- 10) Parents and students will rate school relationships as at least 90% satisfactory

### Implementation Timeline

Activity/Outcome	Person(s) Responsible	Measurement Tool(s)	Date to be Completed	Status
1) Use of common planning time in ELA,	Administration	Curriculum Map	June 2025	

Math, Science and Social Studies to complete standards-aligned curriculum mapping for all classes.	Building Leadership Team Faculty	Templates		
2) Use of common planning time in ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies to create rigorous lessons with a focus on instructional practices utilizing the district's CPT Meeting Agenda	Administration Building Leadership Team Faculty	Observation/ Feedback Lesson Plan Templates CPT Agendas and Evaluations	Weekly Ongoing Target Completion June 2026	
5) Regular monitoring of formative assessment data (ongoing checks for understanding) and summative assessment data (interim assessments, STAR benchmark testing, MCAS) to identify student needs and the instructional strategies necessary for addressing identified deficiencies	Administration Building Leadership Team Faculty	MCAS Data STAR Data Various Formative/ Summative Assessment Tools	Weekly Ongoing	
3) Regular professional development for faculty on MTSS to better understand and address academic, behavioral and social-emotional needs of our students	MTSS Administrator Building Administration Tier 1, 2 & 3 Teams	MTSS Data Collection Tools (academic, SEL, behavioral data)	Yearly Ongoing	
4) Use of observation/evaluation data to reinforce best teaching practices focusing on instructional practices and academic, behavioral and social-emotional needs of students	Administration	Observation/ Feedback Teachpoint Rigor Rubric Instructional Checks Rubric	Yearly Ongoing	
6) Ongoing professional development on empathetic personal interactions with students, de-escalation techniques, and a restorative practice approach to discipline	Administration MTSS Administrator	Discipline Data Observation/ Feedback	Yearly Ongoing	
7) Regular monitoring of student discipline, attendance, and academic data and continued identification of tiered interventions	Administration MTSS Tier 1, 2 & 3 Teams	GHS Tracker & Progress Monitoring Tool	Monthly Ongoing	
10) Regular monitoring of social-emotional data to identify students in need of tiered supports	Administration Tier 1, 2 & 3 Teams	GHS Tracker & Progress Monitoring Tool BESS Data	Monthly Ongoing	
11) Regular review of school-wide expectations; professional development for teachers; and a system for reviewing expectations in every classroom	MTSS Administrator Building Administration	School-wide expectations fidelity check-list	Quarterly Ongoing	

	Faculty			
12) Use scheduled advisory time for social-emotional programming utilizing the Character Strong curriculum, and academic monitoring and interventions	MTSS Administrator Building Leadership Team Faculty	MTSS Data, Collection Tool Check & Connect Data	Weekly Ongoing	
13) School Council meetings to share information and receive parent input into decision-making regarding school activities, policies and programs; supplemented by the annual Climate & Culture Survey	Administration School Council	Monthly Agenda & Meeting Notes Climate & Culture Survey	Monthly Ongoing	
14) Regularly use social media platforms, emails and one-call system to disseminate pertinent information to students and families	Administration Media Specialist	Facebook PlusPortals Newsletters	Ongoing	
15) Continue development of Early College Academy and Vocational Programs	College & Career Readiness Coordinator Building Administration School Counselors	DESE and EC Data Collection Tools	Yearly Ongoing	

## Gardner Academy School Improvement Plan 2024-2027

Mission			
<p>Gardner Academy is a restorative school that focuses on relationships and building a community of learners who care for and support each other. Restorative practices are embedded in all aspects of our community on a daily basis.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>We are learners, not finishers!</i></p>			
Core Values			
Community	Compassion	Responsibility	Integrity
Vision			
<p><b>Gardner Academy will be a model of a restorative, alternative high school that meets the social, emotional, and academic needs of all our students in partnership with their families and the wider community.</b></p> <p><b>Every student, in every classroom, every day, will:</b></p> <p><b><i>feel welcomed, safe, and included in our community;</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adults will personally welcome each student as they enter the school and each classroom.</li> <li>• Students will learn social-emotional skills through direct instruction, supports, and institutional practices.</li> <li>• Our school will actively engage families in the education of their students and community.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>have adults consistently interact in ways that foster positive, supportive relationships;</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School expectations, practices, and rules will be informed by the chronological and actual developmental levels of the children we serve.</li> <li>• Adult responses to student's behaviors will be trauma-informed and restorative and provide opportunities for students to learn from their mistakes, take accountability, and make amends.</li> <li>• The school will work proactively and collaboratively with families to support the whole child.</li> <li>• Disciplinary practices will be done through a restorative approach.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>and be engaged in relevant, academically rigorous instruction, informed by data.</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each lesson will incorporate rigorous student tasks that engage all learners, support higher-order thinking, monitor each student's progress, and provide feedback to students for improvement.</li> <li>• The school will monitor and adapt its instruction to ensure students learn the skills and knowledge to prepare them for their own future.</li> </ul>			
Theory of Action			
<p><b><i>If we:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Create</i></b> a clear set of expectations and strategies that are shared across every classroom to assess, monitor, and utilize academic, behavioral, and social emotional data to inform our instruction and interventions,</li> <li>• <b><i>Then</i></b> there will be continuity of practices across all classrooms and grade levels where the same high level of rigorous instruction is provided to all students that is aligned with objectives and state standards.</li> </ul>			



- **And**, if we implement challenging learning activities and differentiated instructional strategies that support students' academic, behavioral, and social emotional growth while developing positive relationships,
- **Then** students will develop higher order thinking skills and the ability to articulate their thinking, while utilizing appropriately challenging resources.
- **And**, if we work in collaboration with families and community partners to engage in shared decision making for effective educational programming while giving all students equitable access and opportunities to achieve at their highest level,
- **Then** students will become lifelong, collaborative, problem solvers who positively contribute to the workforce and their community.

Strategic Objectives			
<b>Academic:</b> Create and implement a standards-based curriculum across all grades and disciplines utilizing data to inform instruction, lessons, and interventions while supporting equity:	<b>Behavioral:</b> Create and implement clear expectations and strategies across all grades utilizing data to inform behavioral supports and interventions while supporting equity:	<b>Social Emotional Learning:</b> Utilize data to inform social emotional interventions and provide tiered supports to all students while supporting equity:	<b>Collaboration with Families and Community Partners:</b> Collaborate with families and community partners to engage in shared decision-making for effective educational programming including students social, emotional, and academic development while supporting equity:
Action Steps			
Comprehensive professional development for staff and common planning time based on an MTSS tiered approach	Comprehensive professional development for staff based on an MTSS tiered approach	Comprehensive professional development for staff based on an MTSS tiered approach	Produce and administer student, staff, and family feedback surveys
Create a school-wide written curriculum in a common format by subject area that is aligned with state standards and that is reviewed regularly	Develop, utilize and enforce a system of school-wide behavioral expectations	Monitor social-emotional data and through an MTSS approach and incorporate appropriate tiered interventions accordingly	Increase our use of digital platforms including social media and digital newsletter to share information and celebrate student achievement
Develop and incorporate rigorous and engaging instruction and lessons aligned with state standards.	Monitor referral data through our MTSS system to create and maintain a restorative approach to behavioral interventions and discipline.	Incorporate an SEL curriculum into our Advisory period, which addresses students' social emotional needs	Establish and maintain School Council meetings and voice for family/community concerns and feedback

Monitor academic data that will drive future instruction, assessments (formative and summative) and interventions		Integrate Tier 1 SEL and restorative practices into all classes across all grades	Expand community partnerships
Utilize teacher observation and evaluation system as well as the rigor rubric and the classroom instructional checks rubric to gather learning walk data for analysis and sharing to improve instructional outcomes		Formalize the process for college and career planning and begin in 9th grade or whenever a student enrolls to include path during high school	

### Outcomes

- 1) Teachers in classrooms will incorporate Tier 1 academic, behavioral, and social-emotional interventions with 80% fidelity
- 2) 100% of the teachers will regularly review school-wide expectations with their students multiple times a year and have school-wide and classroom expectations posted in their classrooms
- 3) 80% of students in need of Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports will meet progress targets
- 4) GA will eliminate discipline disparities for all subgroups
- 5) GA will eliminate attendance disparities for all subgroups
- 6) Students with disabilities and mulit-lingual learners will have an increase of 10% meeting or exceeding on MCAS
- 7) All subgroups will meet MCAS targets in ELA, math, and science
- 8) Drop-out rates for all subgroups will be no higher than the aggregate
- 9) At least 75% of our students will identify a post high school goal and will take the necessary steps to achieve it including steps taken during high school (ex. MVP, Gateway, after school jobs, etc)
- 10) Families and students will rate school relationships as at least 90% satisfactory

### Implementation Timeline

Activity/Outcome	Person(s) Responsible	Measurement Tool(s)	Date to be Completed	Status
1) Use of common planning time for ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies to complete standards-based curriculum mapping for all classes.	Administration Building Leadership Team Faculty	Curriculum Map Templates	June 2025	Partially completed and continuing to work on

2) Use of common planning time in ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies to create rigorous lessons with a focus on instructional practices utilizing the district's CPT Meeting Agenda	Administration Building Leadership Team Faculty	Observation/ Feedback Lesson Plan Templates CPT Agendas and Evaluations	Weekly Ongoing Target Completion June 2026	
3) Regular monitoring of formative assessment data (ongoing checks for understanding) and summative assessment data (interim assessments, STAR benchmark testing, MCAS) to identify student needs and the instructional strategies necessary for addressing identified deficiencies	Administration Building Leadership Team Faculty	MCAS Data STAR Data Various Formative/ Summative Assessment Tools	Weekly Ongoing	
4) Regular professional development for faculty on MTSS to better understand and address academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of our students	MTSS Administrator Building Administration Tier 1, 2 & 3 Teams	MTSS Data Collection Tools (academic, SEL, behavioral data)	Yearly Ongoing	
5) Use of observation/evaluation data to reinforce best teaching practices focusing on instructional practices and academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of students	Administration	Observation/ Feedback Teachpoint Rigor Rubric Instructional Checks Rubric	Yearly Ongoing	
6) Ongoing professional development on de-escalation techniques and restorative practices to address behavior and discipline	Administration MTSS Administrator School Counselor	Discipline Data Observation/ Feedback	Yearly Ongoing	
7) Regular monitoring of student discipline, attendance, and academic data and continued identification of tiered interventions	Administration MTSS Tier 1, 2 & 3 Teams	MTSS Tracker & Progress Monitoring Tool	Monthly Ongoing	
8) Regular monitoring of social-emotional data to identify students in need of tiered supports	Administration Tier 1, 2 & 3 Teams	MTSS tracker & Progress Monitoring Tool BESS Data	Monthly Ongoing	
9) Regular review of school-wide expectations; professional development for teachers, and a system for reviewing expectations in every classroom	MTSS Administrator Building Administration Faculty	School-wide expectations fidelity check-list	Quarterly Ongoing	
12) Use scheduled advisory time for	MTSS	MTSS Data,	Weekly	

social-emotional programming utilizing the Second Step curriculum, and academic monitoring and interventions	Administrator Building Leadership Team Faculty	Collection Tool Check & Connect Data	Ongoing	
13) Survey families to determine effective modes of communication and to establish a robust School Council to share information and receive family input into decision-making regarding school activities, policies and programs. This work will be supplemented by the bi-annual School Climate Survey	Administration School Council	Monthly Agenda & Meeting Notes School Climate Survey	Spring 2025	Not completed and expect to be completed Spring 2026
14) Regularly use social media platforms, emails and one-call system to disseminate pertinent information to students and families	Administration	Facebook Newsletters	Ongoing	
15) Create a program for robust planning for students path during high school and beyond high school	College & Career Readiness Coordinator Building Administration School Counselors Job Coach	DESE and EC Data Collection Tools	Yearly Ongoing	



# Gardner High School

Michael Bartkus Principal  
 Lauren Davis, Assistant Principal  
 Melissa Paine, Assistant Principal



Gardner Public Schools

[www.gardnerk12.org](http://www.gardnerk12.org)

200 Catherine Street, Gardner, MA 01440

P: (978) 632-1600

F: (978) 630-4040

## GHS College & Career Programs School Committee Report December 2025

### GHS Early College Programs

The GHS Early College Academy continues to thrive. We have 89 students enrolled in the program. Although most of the students in the program take classes on the MWCC campus, many of them return to GHS in the afternoons to take additional high school classes. This year we also have a cohort of 16 juniors who take two college classes at the high school, which are taught by MWCC professors. Those students are also enrolled in three afternoon high school classes. Of note this year is that we have five current seniors who are on track to graduate from the Academy with full associate's degrees. All these classes continue to be free of charge for our students. Recruiting efforts for the 2026-2027 school year will be starting in January.

### Early College Academy Enrollment Data

White - 65%
Hispanic - 20%
Black/African American - 7%
Multi-Racial - 8%
Low Income - 42%
IEP/504 - 6%
EL - 1%

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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.*

*The Gardner Public Schools prohibit sex discrimination in any education program or activity that it operates. Individuals may report concerns or questions to the Title IX Coordinator. The notice of nondiscrimination is located at [www.gardnerk12.org](http://www.gardnerk12.org)*

The Pathways and Gateway to College Programs are undergoing a bit of a change with the creation of some new MOUs with other districts. Pathways currently has 41 students enrolled who will be receiving GPS diplomas and all those students are on track to earn a full associate's degree by their graduation.

Gateway to College currently has 37 students enrolled in the program and those students will be earning a Gardner Academy diploma. Those students are enrolled in college classes that are used towards earning their diplomas while covering all GPS graduation requirements.

### MVP Academy

The MVP Academy, our partnership program with Monty Tech, currently has 15 students enrolled. There are 5 seniors (two in carpentry and three in electrical) and 10 juniors (five in carpentry and five in electrical) in the program. We are very excited to be adding plumbing to the trades offered through this program for next year. Although we are waiting for official notification, all indications from DESE are that our application will be approved and we will be adding 10 additional students in this new trade (five juniors and five seniors) for the 2026-2027 school year. Recruitment for next year will be beginning in January.

#### MVP Enrollment Data

White - 40%
Hispanic - 49%
Black/African American - 20%
Multi-Racial - 0%
Low Income - 67%
IEP/504 - 40%
EL - 13%

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# Gardner Public Schools

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

www.gardnerk12.org

160 Elm Street, Gardner, MA 01440

(978) 632-1000

December 1, 2025

## Curriculum and Instruction Update

### MTSS Academics

This year the District is focused on monitoring the progress of student achievement and growth outcomes in reading and math disaggregated by “All Students”, “Students with Disabilities”, and “Multilingual Learners”. To support this progress, the District has identified and is providing targeted training to staff regarding specific instructional planning and implementation practices. Additionally, the District collaborated with building administrators to develop comprehensive, standardized tools to measure the effectiveness of expected planning and implementation practices. The District/Building Academic teams will utilize data from the measurement tools to determine fidelity of implementation and to identify supports/create action steps for improvement. Additionally, District and building leaders meet frequently to support the calibration of observation/feedback/evaluation practices as well as messaging to staff.

To ensure a continuous cycle of improvement and effective implementation of the MTSS academic strategic plan, the District continues to collaborate with consultants from the May Institute and the Lynch Leadership Academy of Boston College, as well as, with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Statewide System of Supports staff. Collaboration with each of these groups will continue throughout this school year and next school year to assist with:

- The refinement of an effective model for tiered supports in both SEL and academics;
- The implementation of a system to monitor progress of the work; and
- The development of a system of sustainability for continuous SEL and academic/instructional improvement.

### Early Literacy

As part of the District's focus on improved student outcomes in literacy, special emphasis continues to be placed on early literacy instruction and intervention. The goal is for all students to be reading on grade level by the end of fourth grade to meet academic success in the upper grades. To meet this goal, the District has contracted with the Hill for Literacy organization to train early elementary teachers in effective reading instructional practices. They are also consulting with the literacy coach and District/building administrators to monitor progress of instructional practices and to create systems for sustainability.

Additionally, the District has developed a team of folks to attend the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) sponsored Dyslexia Institute training taking place during the 2025-2026 school year to improve early reading intervention practices for all students at risk for reading challenges/disabilities. The outcome of attending this training will be the development of a detailed, practical action plan for implementing a highly effective early literacy program designed to identify and address reading difficulties as early as possible.



# Gardner Public Schools

Amber Casavant, Director of MTSS/PBIS



## Gardner Public Schools Quarterly Report of Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

The SEL pillar of our multi-tiered system focuses on the following areas: exclusionary discipline, attendance/chronic absenteeism, school culture and climate, and family/school partnerships and any equity gaps identified within those areas. This work incorporates the work of two core district teams:

1. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) & Family Engagement (FE) Team
2. Social/Emotional Learning (SEL) Team

The Academic pillar is not yet integrated with the SEL pillar, however the team is working to align the Academic MTSS framework with the SEL MTSS framework. This work incorporates the work of two core district teams:

1. District Instructional Leadership Team (DILT)
2. Administrative Council

### MTSS SEL UPDATES:

### External Recognition:

- Presented as part of an exemplar panel in November at the New England PBIS Forum in Norwood MA, on District Level Alignment and Integration for MTSS. Many of our PBIS/FE coaches joined for PD.



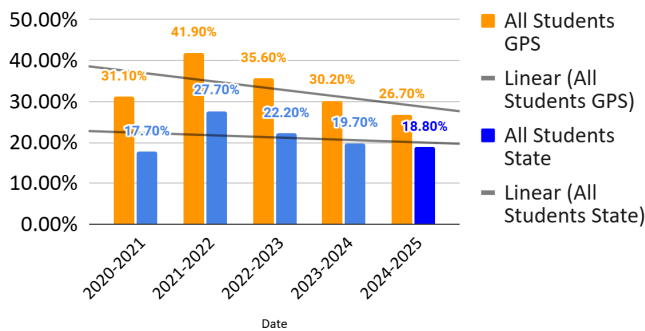
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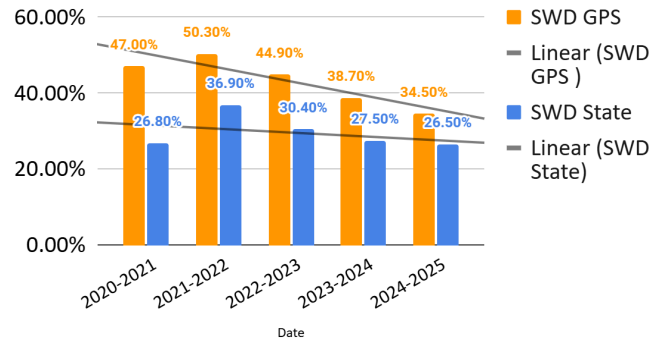
## District Level MTSS SEL Student Outcome Successes:

- Recently released DESE End of Year Attendance Data for 24-25 showed even further improvements in attendance and chronic absenteeism. We continue to close the gap for All Students and SWD for Chronic Absenteeism (missing 10% or more school days) and Severe Chronic Absenteeism (missing 20% or more school days) as well as continue to close the gap for our Multilingual, Latino and Black/African American populations, with our Black/African American population chronic absenteeism being even below the state average.

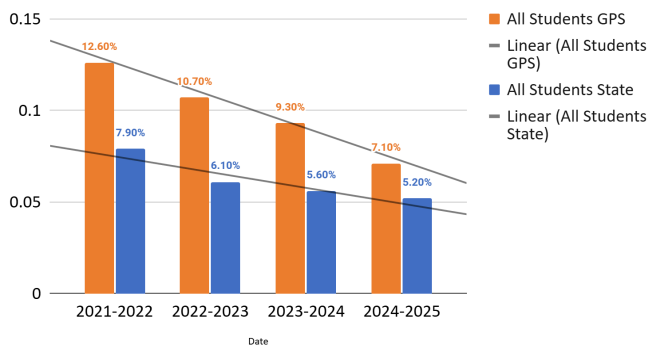
All Students Chronic Absenteeism Rate (10%+ Days Missed)  
GPS Compared to State



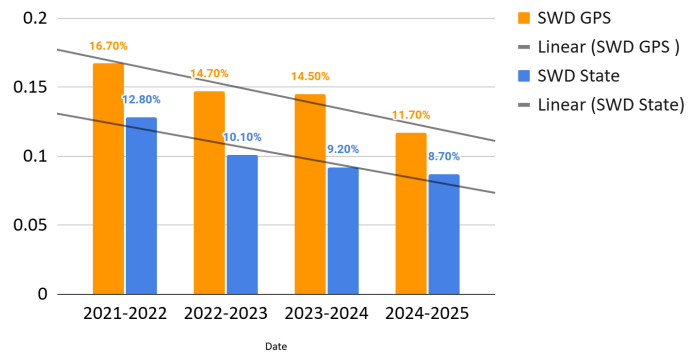
SWD Chronic Absenteeism Rate (10%+ Days Missed)  
GPS Compared to State



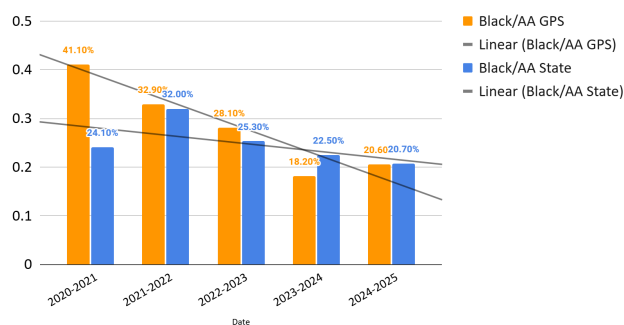
All Students Severe Chronic Absenteeism Rate (20%+ Days Missed)  
to State GPS Compared



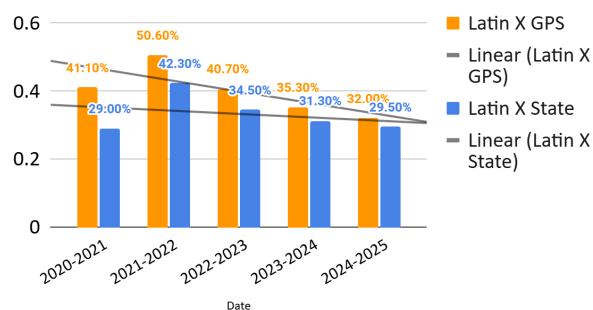
SWD Severe Chronic Absenteeism Rate (20%+ Days Missed)  
GPS Compared to State



Black/AA Chronic Absenteeism Rate (10%+ Days Missed)  
GPS Compared to State



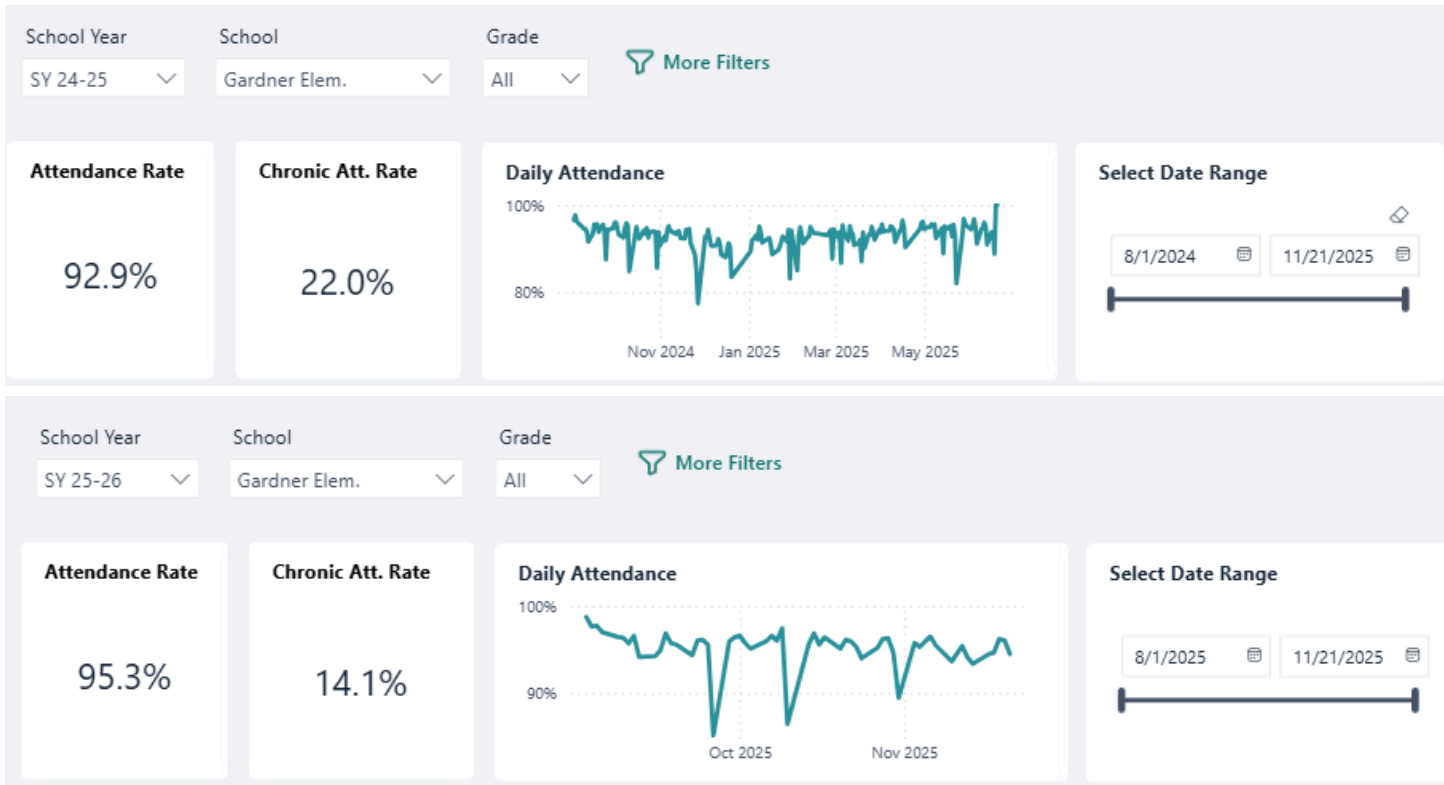
Latin X Chronic Absenteeism Rate (10%+ Days Missed)  
GPS Compared to State



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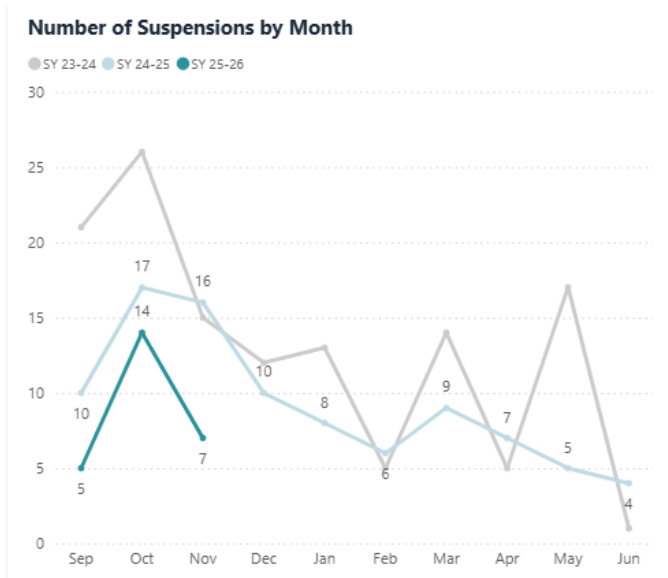
School Level SEL Spotlight Fall 2025:

**Gardner Elementary School:** Chronic Absenteeism rate continues to decrease as compared to this time last year (August -November) from 22% down to 14% with an overall 36% decrease!

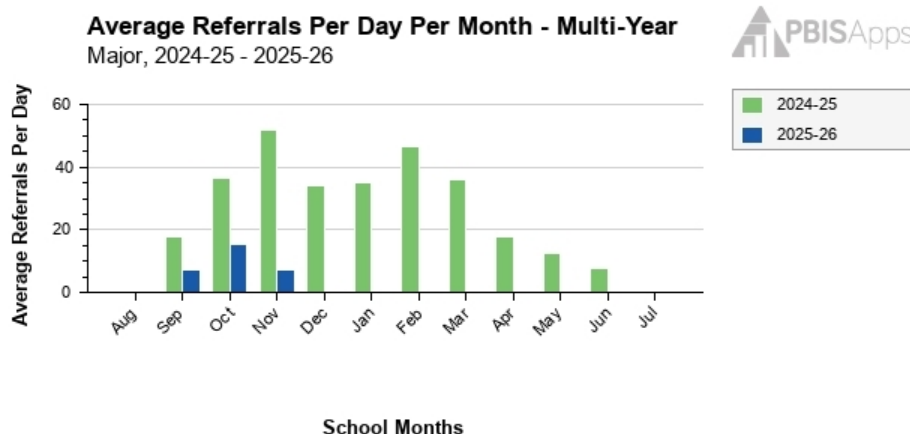


**Gardner High School:** Suspensions continue to decrease as compared to Fall of last two years

(see graph below)



**Gardner Academy:** Office Discipline Referrals have significantly reduced as compared to Fall of last year for the months of October and November (see graph below).



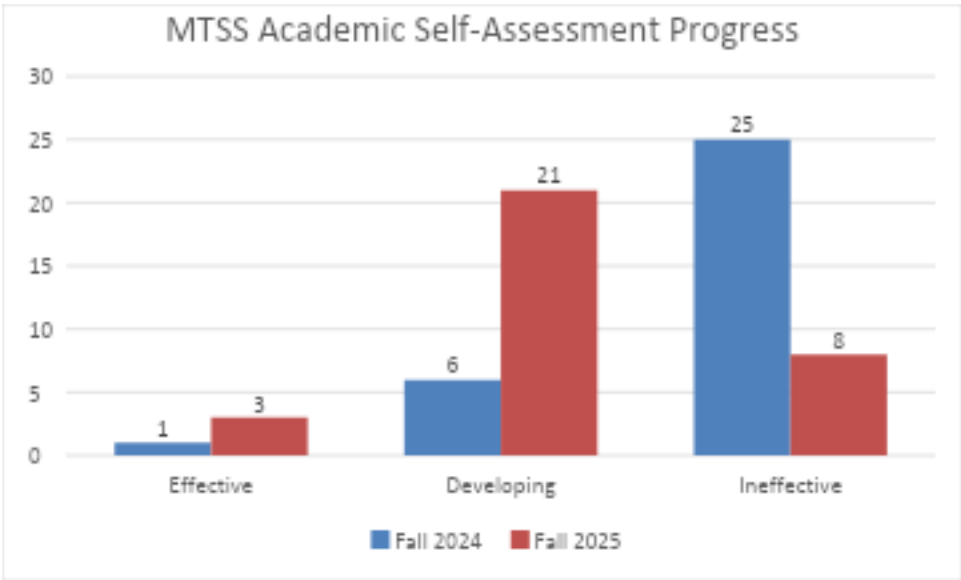
### **SEL Fall Calendar of Assessments, Fidelity and Communication & Other SEL Work**

- All Schools have completed their **1st 6 weeks of teaching the schoolwide expectations** for tier 1
- Schools are in the process of completing the 1st round of **Tiered Fidelity Inventory walkthroughs** following teaching of expectations to identify how well students and staff know, and are teaching the school wide expectations and to assess how well students are feeling valued and enjoying their incentives.
- Schools are beginning to implement the **School Climate Survey** for families, students and staff now through mid December.
- Schools have conducted 1st round of **Fidelity Checks for Tier 1 SEL Curriculum**
- **Behavioral Emotional Screening System (BESS)** was completed in October and teams are beginning to utilize that data to identify students in need for tier 2 and tier 3 supports
- **Threat Assessment Teams** have been integrated into Tier 3 team systems and practices

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**MTSS ACADEMICS UPDATES:**

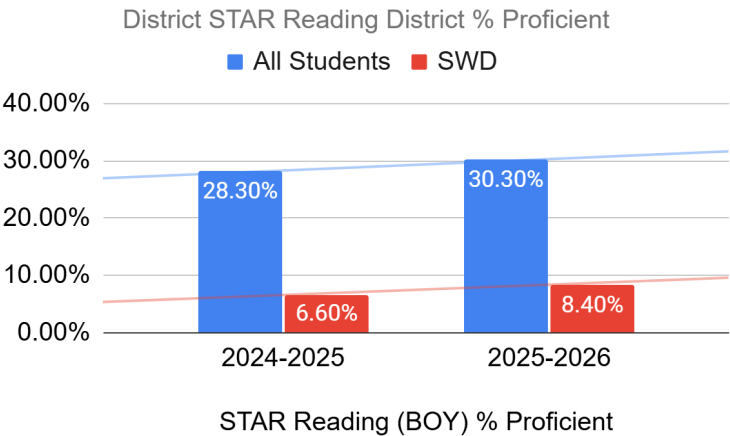
- The District Academic Team completed another round of self-assessment, which showed 56% progress on self-assessment items as compared to fall of 2024 and updated the district team action plan accordingly.



- All Schools now have a Tier 1 Academic MTSS Team that is focused on data based decision making for the following data sources at the Tier 1 level.
  - Student Outcome Measures: MCAS, DIBELS, STAR
  - Fidelity of Implementation Measures: CPT Fidelity, Tier 1 Instructional Practices and Discourse Look Fors and Feedback.
- Gardner Middle School began utilizing DIBELS this year

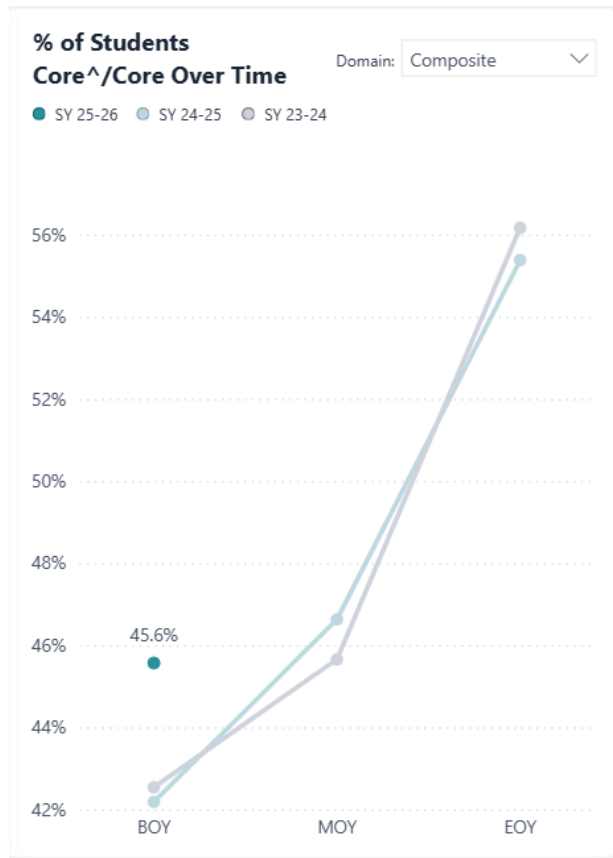
**Student Academic Outcome Successes Fall 2025:**

- District Level STAR Reading Fall Beginning of year (BOY) data increased for ALL students as compared to last Fall BOY screening window from 28.3% to 30.3% and for SWD from 6.6% to 8.4% (see graph below)

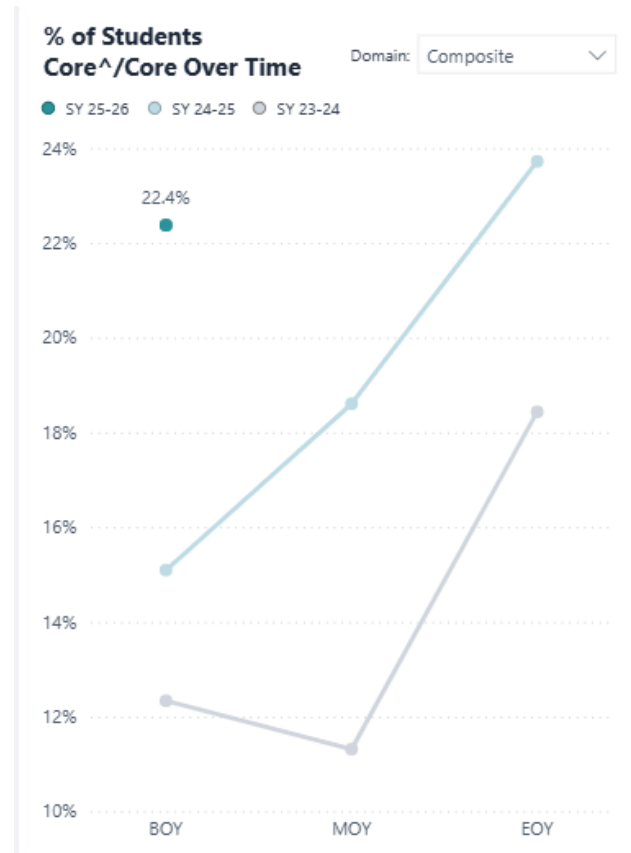


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- Gardner Elementary School 2025 DIBELS Beginning of year (BOY) data increased for ***on or above grade level*** for All Students from 42.2% to 45.6% and for SWD from 15.10% to 22.4% (**48% increase for SWD**) as compared to Fall of last year. The percentage of students reading on grade level is approximately where our students were in the MOY for the last two years for ALL Students and closer to where they were at the end last year for SWD. This makes us cautiously optimistic that there will be an increase in both MOY and EOY reading benchmarks for ALL Students and SWD!



**ALL Students**



**SWD**

### Academic Fall Calendar of Assessments, Fidelity and Communication & Other Academic Work

- All Schools completed Fall BOY STAR Benchmark Screener
- Gardner Elementary and Gardner Middle Schools have completed BOY DIBELS Screener
- Administrators across all schools are collecting Fall fidelity data for CPT agreements and Discourse Look For's/Feedback that will be reviewed by the District Team at the mid year data review
- Schools and Central Office will be completing Tier 1 Instructional practices mid year fidelity check during the December/January months.
- Gardner Elementary School Grade level departments are beginning to organize monthly academic newsletters to families!

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# Gardner Public Schools

Courtney Dunn, *Grants & Communications Manager*

www.gardnerk12.org

160 Elm Street, Gardner, MA 01440

(978) 632-1000

## Grants & Communications Update to School Committee – December 8, 2025

### Grants

The district is awaiting award of the following grants:

- [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.
- [FY26 Fund Code 213: Support Implementing of Updated Regulations Regarding Time-Out Practices](#), to continue the implementation of interventions and strategies to improve behavior de-escalation and reduce the use of time out rooms. The district is eligible for \$50,000 and will submit the application prior to the deadline on November 15.

The district also assisted Gardner Elementary School in applying to participate in the Early Literacy High-Dosage Tutoring Program, a DESE-sponsored opportunity to provide targeted access to tutoring during the school day for first graders scoring below or well-below set benchmarks. GES should get notification of award sometime in January.

The North Central School Leadership Pipeline has submitted its Year 1 Interim Report. Some highlights of the program are strategy alignment across the participating districts and positive feedback from all levels of participants about the quality of the professional development and coaching from Lynch Leadership Academy. This grant and all associated programmatic elements will run through 2027.

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# Gardner Public Schools

Joyce West, Director of Pupil Personnel Services

Tasha Gamble, Assistant Director of Pupil Personnel Services



www.gardnerk12.org

160 Elm Street, Gardner MA 01440

(978) 630-4076

December 1, 2025

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

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

SEPAC held a meeting on November 12, 2025 from 6:00-7:00 p.m. Approximately 3 parents were in attendance and 1 district administrator. The next meeting is scheduled for December 10th, 2025 from 6-7 p.m. The agenda is forthcoming. The District assisted SEPAC with eliciting more interest with the parent-led organization during parent conference. The special education department copied fliers made available and distributed to parents.

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT:**

Gardner's pre-school program evaluation has been completed. The report has been disseminated to administration and a meeting is scheduled with CASE Collaborative consultant, Anne Donovan, to review the recommendations. A meeting to review the report with pre-school teachers and related services providers will be scheduled after the meeting with the consultant is held.

The district wanted the following questions answered at part of the evaluation to evaluate the effectiveness of our programs. The district's increasing concerns with the number of students qualifying for special education and the level of need/severity prompted the action to look at the program holistically to make needed adjustments.

- 1) What are the recent data trends in the District's Preschool Program enrollment and how can this data be leveraged to anticipate future needs and inform long-term planning?*
- 2) Is the organization of staff resources efficient and effective to meet the needs of students across the District's Preschool Program?*
- 3) How does the District's Preschool Program support language development for students with Autism and other significant disabilities, with a focus on integrating a range of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) methods?*
- 4) What types of shared behavioral supports does the Preschool Program provide to students and how do these practices align with a robust PBIS framework?*

The following are highlights from the summary of findings:

### **Strengths:**

#### **1. High Quality Physical Environment and Classroom Design**

- Preschool classrooms are spacious, inclusive, and organized using Universal Design principles,

supporting both whole-class and small-group instruction

- Visual supports, sensory areas, and developmentally appropriate materials promote predictability, independence, and engagement across diverse learning needs
- Dedicated “break space” areas and sensory tools supports students’ regulation needs

## 2. Multidisciplinary Team Approach

- Robust multidisciplinary team including teachers, paraprofessionals, Speech-Language Pathologists, Occupational and Physical Therapists, School Adjustment Counselors, and BCBAs
- Assessments consider areas of need across multiple developmental domains
- IEPs reflect appropriate goal areas and objectives related to assessments and identified needs

## 3. Diverse, Engaged, and Committed Classroom Staff

- Educators and paraprofessionals reflect diverse backgrounds, enriching the inclusivity of the program
- Staff demonstrate strong dedication to fostering early literacy, play-based learning, and social-emotional growth through responsive and caring instruction
- Ongoing enhancements in curriculum alignment underscore a culture of continuous improvement

## 4. Consistency Across Classrooms and Inclusive Practices

- Classroom organization, routines, and visuals are consistently aligned, ensuring predictability and structure for all learners
- Shared instructional resources and thematic units via a centralized resource drive promote curriculum coherence and instructional quality

## 5. Specialized District “Options” Program

- The district’s “Options” Program continuum, which includes a PreK/K classroom, provides specialized programming for students with Autism and complex learning needs. Program includes several Registered Behavior Technicians, with BCBA oversight, to ensure targeted behavioral and academic interventions
- This in-district program reduces the need for out-of-district placements by providing students with complex needs access to intensive educational supports within their own community school

### **Opportunities for Improvement:**

#### 1. Programming for Students with Autism and Complex Learning Profiles

- The district serves an increasing population of students with Autism that is 43% higher than the state average
- Currently, 60% of all preschool-aged students with IEPs have a primary educational disability of Autism, necessitating expanded full-day programming aligned with evidence-based recommendations
- Strengthening program capacity and integrating evidence-based instructional methodologies including ABA across integrated classrooms is essential

#### 2. Preschool Model and Scheduling Structure

- Inconsistent student schedules create disruptions to instructional flow and consistent peer cohorts, which is especially challenging for students with disabilities
- Disparities in instructional hours between community peers and students with disabilities highlight inequitable access to learning opportunities



- Revising the program model to ensure more instructional hours, including increased full-day options, would improve continuity, provide more robust student supports, and improve learning outcomes

### 3. Inconsistent Use of Communication Supports and AAC Systems

- Although visual supports are present, their instructional integration varies among classrooms
- Access to effective AAC systems is inconsistent, delaying early communication interventions for students with limited/no verbal skills
- Strategic alignment of SLP assignments with expertise in early childhood and AAC, and providing SLPs with professional development in AAC, would build in-district capacity and improve service quality and continuity

### 4. Instructional Structure and Adult Facilitation During Centers

- Center-based learning often lacks consistent adult facilitation and targeted instruction, limiting its instructional impact
- Behavioral and safety concerns frequently divert staff attention, reducing opportunities for scaffolded learning

### 5. Staffing Levels and Professional Training/Expertise

- The current 2:15 staff-to-student ratio is insufficient to meet the high behavioral and instructional needs of the preschool population in many current classrooms
- Variability in paraprofessional training limits consistent implementation of instructional supports
- Several teachers are employed under waivers or hold general education licenses; only 1/6 preschool teachers hold an active special education license in the area in which they are teaching
- Increasing qualified staff, expanding RBT roles, and strengthening professional development are critical to improving instructional quality and student outcomes

### 6. Implementation of Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Interventions

- Limited BCBA and SAC allocation to the program impact behavioral and social-emotional supports in integrated classrooms
- The District has not met DESE early childhood targets (Indicator 7) for demonstrating growth in students' positive social-emotional skills or in the acquisition and use of knowledge and skills by the time students exited preschool
- Challenges noted in preschool-to-kindergarten transition supports and student readiness

It is anticipated that after meeting with the consultant recommendations for additional staffing, training, and schedule revisions will be made.