TO: School Committee

FROM: Emily Parks

DATE: May 9, 2019

RE: Report on 2018-2019 District Goals

I'm am pleased to present this report on the 2018-2019 district goals. We have had a productive and rewarding year in the Westwood Public Schools.

At the September School Committee meeting, I presented the <u>Strategy for District Improvement</u> that was developed by the Administrative Council as part of our district leadership team summer work. The development of this improvement strategy was informed by the information and insights gathered during my year-long entry process in the 2017-2018 school year.

The strategy document (appendix A) begins by articulating 4 strategic objectives that are intended to guide the district's work for 3-5 years:

- Meaningful Learning Experiences
- Coherent, Connected Curriculum
- Healthy and Supported School Community
- Facilities for the Future

For each strategic objective, we articulated three priorities for the 2018-2019 school year that move us toward the objective. In the early fall, the Administrative Council examined these priorities and began to operationalize them. For each priority area, we identified several actions that we believed would be high leverage next steps to move us toward our intended outcomes.

The approach to this strategy work has represented a different way of thinking about the district's work. The priorities we identified are intentionally:

- focused on the instructional core
- interconnected and complementary
- reflective of the need to be both visionary and problem-solving

Throughout the year, the Administrative Council has continually referred to the identified priorities and action steps. The articulated priorities have steered the district's professional development work, been reflected in programming for parents, are embedded in individual school improvement plans, informed discussions with teachers and administrators during the evaluation goal-setting process, and guided the district's budget discussions and allocation of resources.

In January, the Administrative Council returned to the strategy document to assess our progress on each of the identified action steps for the year. We reflected on where we had made significant process to date and importantly refocused on a couple of items that we determined required more attention throughout the spring.

This week, the Administrative Council spent a day together reflecting on our progress this year, discussing the status of each goal, and beginning to plan how to carry the work forward next year. We were pleased that our incoming Preschool Director and incoming METCO Director were able to join us for this work.

Throughout the year members of the team reported on progress on many of these priorities at School Committee meetings either through the Superintendent's Update or as discussion items. Some of these reports and presentations include:

- Report on summer curriculum and professional development (September)
- Report of J-Term pilot and planning for J-Term 2019 (November)
- Parent programming updates (November)
- Report on library student-centered initiatives and expansion of elementary coding (December)
- Report on the SEL Curriculum Review findings and recommendations (February)
- Report of middle school entry findings (April)
- MSBA project updates (monthly)
- Security audit updates (monthly)

These reports and presentations are available on the <u>district website</u> for public access.

The appendix to this memo includes a chart that lists the 2018-2019 action steps associated with each of the district priorities and indicates the status of each step (i.e. complete, substantial progress, some progress, limited progress or organing). In addition, I have highlighted below the progress made on three of the 12 district priorities that have not been discussed at length this year during School Committee meetings.

I look forward to discussing the district's work and answering your questions at the May School Committee meeting.

Highlighted Priority:

- 2.2 Promote coaching, peer observation and peer feedback within and across schools in order to help students progress toward learning goals from year to year/building to building without unnecessary repetition or gaps.
- 2.2.1 Create structure and schedule for PreK to K and Grade 5 to 6 classroom visits and debriefing sessions.

Curriculum leaders in English, math and science worked together to identify dates and teacher teams for grade 5 - 6 visits. The middle school assistant principal created a visit calendar and teachers, curriculum leaders and administrators used the <u>"What to Look For" Guides</u> from DESE as a tool to promote thoughtful observation and debriefing sessions.

2.2.2 Restructure elementary science specialist time from building-based to grade-level based.

Our science specialists tried out a new model for dividing their time among the elementary schools: one worked primarily with grades K - 2, while the other focused on grades 3 - 5. Last year, they used a school-based model instead. One focused on Downey, Deerfield and Hanlon while the other supported teachers at Sheehan and Martha Jones. Specialists are currently gathering feedback from teachers and considering which model will work best moving forward.

2.2.3 Ensure strategic learning priorities are focal point of conversations about instruction through professional development and feedback for evaluators and coaches.

At the start of this year, the leadership team for science (high school department head, middle school coordinator and elementary coordinator) spent a day visiting classes at all levels, to build a sense of what science instruction looks like as kids progress through WPS and to establish key priorities for coaching and feedback.

Three of our literacy specialists had the chance to participate in an intensive coaching course at Teachers' College (Columbia University) and to share new strategies with colleagues.

Elementary principals engaged in classroom observation learning walks as a team 1-2 times per month. The goals of these walks was for principals to get a broader view of teaching practices across the district and to learn from one another by sharing observations about specific instructional strategies and discussing approaches to giving teachers feedback.

Finally, WPS is partnering with other TEC districts to create a online instructional coaching course.

2.2.5 Develop and promote peer observation and feedback (pilot using already established pineapple sign network).

2.2.6 Leverage teacher schedules to promote peer observation and feedback at the high school.

At WHS, many teachers engaged in peer observation as part of a choice-based "reflective practice" professional development series or identified peer observation as an activity they might use to reach a professional goal. The Dean of Students, Assistant Principal and Professional Development coordinator created <u>peer observation norms</u> for high school teachers and an <u>observation template</u> to support vertical (K-12) teams. Administrators also worked to arrange teacher coverage to support peer observation efforts.

Teachers conducted peer observation visits at the elementary and middle schools as well to see English language arts, science, math and special education classes in action.

In addition, teachers in the middle and high school science departments visited one another, with a particular focus on seeing how content instruction in the earlier grades creates the foundation for more sophisticated understanding in high school.

Members of the English language arts/literacy curriculum review team engaged in three, full day cycles of peer observation in Westwood and an additional half day at Natick High School, with time to debrief observations and discuss implications.

Highlighted Priority:

3.2 Implement programs and instructional practices that recognize and support the needs of students and families an increasingly diverse community.

This has been a significant focus for the district in terms of student programming, professional development for teachers and parent programming, as follows:

3.2.1 Refine the "Courageous Conversations" series at Westwood High School.

During the summer (2018), a small team of staff members convened to develop the year's Courageous Conversations program, reviewing student and staff feedback and data from a student focus group meeting (the "Think Tank") from the Spring. One key finding was that students preferred more structured time and support to debrief the sessions they attended. The group developed debriefing protocols for the year's programs; these were used after each of our programs and were even expanded in the final program, Speak About It, to include trained student leaders of debrief sessions. The group met before and after each event, reviewing data and developing after-action plans to be applied to remaining and future programs. Most recently, the group conducted the Think Tank focus group again in early May 2019 and identified topics of interest to the students. The group is in the process of refining the overall design of the program to reflect some cyclical components (i.e. topics that we may program in alternating years as they are always high-interest, high-impact topics; doing so would ensure that all students are exposed to the most critical topics at least once in their four years).

A brief synopsis of each 2018-2019 Courageous Conversations event can be found here.

3.2.2 Provide teacher training on navigating conversations about culturally-sensitive topics including topics of race.

Our district wide professional development day on November 26, "Hear Me, See Me, Teach Me" featured a keynote presentation, generously financed by the Foundation for Westwood Education, by David Johns, Executive Director of the National Black Justice Coalition. After the keynote presentation, five of our Boston-resident students spoke with faculty about their experience as students of color in Westwood. The students had previously spent a day with David Johns in preparation for presenting to faculty and had been encouraged to articulate specific things that the district and teachers could do to support their learning and educational experience. In the afternoon, teachers attended one of the following workshops:

- Courageous Conversations and Restorative Practices
- Educating Boys of Color: Often Unheard, Unseen, and Untaught Strategies for Changing That Narrative
- Engaging for Success: Family and Student Engagement 101
- Let's Talk About Race and Culture in Schools
- Let's Talk About Race It's Elementary
- Special Education: Identifying and Supporting Students of Color
- Talking and Teaching About Racism: The Mirror and Window Approach

United in the Work: Understanding Each Other's Journey

Teachers were asked to rate the full day keynote presentation and workshops and to comment on their experiences, and feedback was <u>overwhelmingly positive</u>.

In addition, on two early release days in the fall at all levels, we contracted with Initiatives for Developing Equity and Achievement for Students (IDEAS) to provide professional development around race and cultural proficiency. Feedback about these days was mixed. While teachers indicated that they were interested in the topic and appreciated the chance to explore issues of race and identity, a number of them felt that the group sizes were too large (e.g., the elementary teachers worked together as a full group for one session) and that the presentations seemed too "canned" instead of tailored to our staff.

In the wake of our district-wide PD work, twenty five educators have formed a "Welcoming Schools Working Group" with the goal of continuing to welcome and support students, families and staff of color. In addition, the district will offer two related PD courses next year:

<u>Discussions on Race in the Classroom</u> and <u>Creating a More Culturally Competent Curriculum</u>.

3.2.3 Offer parent education series on talking with kids about race.

In January and February, we offered a <u>3 evening workshop series</u> on talking with kids about race facilitated by Dr. Carroll Blake, Lead Executive Coach for Male Educators of Color (MEOC) in the Boston Public Schools, and former administrator and METCO Director for the Wellesley Public Schools and Dr. Patricia Kelly, former principal in the Newton Public Schools. Participants expressed a great deal of appreciation that the district had organized this experience. Notably, by the end of the third session, participants were engaging in honest dialogue with each other as parents and community members, and while the School Department was still part of the conversation, the discussion had broadened from what the "schools should do" to a wider vantage point. Participants shared contact information so that they could stay connected beyond the workshop series.

3.2.4 Continue expanding library collections.

In all of our elementary libraries we invested in updating and expanding our collection to include books that act as both a "mirror" and a "window." We want to ensure that students both see themselves and their families reflected in the literature they read and that books provide a way for them to view and think about a diverse world. The Library Director applied for grant funding through the Foundation for Westwood Education to further our efforts in this area.

3.2.5 Continue process of translating district documents into multiple languages that reflect the primary languages spoken by our families.

The District has worked this year to raise awareness of the need to provide important documents and school-based communications in a parent's primary language. Our most

commonly spoken languages are Arabic, Mandarin and Spanish. Significant numbers of student documents, report cards, IEPs, evaluations and forms have been translated this year. Next steps are to continue creating a bank of all major documents in these three languages and work with the translation resources we have in the district and via technology to provide more access to school-based events, flyers, newsletters, etc.

3.2.6 Continue to incorporate school-based and classroom-based strategies for supporting LGBTQ students and families.

We continued in 2018-2019 to address this goal by working with parents, teachers, and students:

We partnered with Danielle Murray, a Westwood parent and Safe and Welcoming Schools Specialist for the Boston Public Schools to provide professional development for teachers and to offer a parent workshop, "Preventing Biased-Based Bullying."

In January, 6 alumns (WHS '75, WHS '05, WHS '15, and WHS '17) were part of a panel discussion to talk about their experiences being LGBTQ while at WHS and afterward. Panelists shared about their coming out journeys, the challenges that they faced, and the people who nurtured them and loved them and helped them be themselves. They also gave advice to current LGBTQ students about finding the people who will support them,, and they gave suggestions to straight allies about how to best support LGBTQ friends and peers. This panel discussion was attended by approximately 600 WHS students. Following the larger presentation, students in the GSA had the opportunity to meet with the panelists in a smaller setting for about an hour to ask questions and discuss their experiences.

Finally, as of this spring, TMS has started a GSA. The meetings are scheduled during the school day for interested students.

3.2.7 Expand efforts to recruit, hire, and support a diverse staff

This fall, the district joined the <u>Greater Boston School Human Resource Network</u>--a group of similar districts looking to recruit and retain staff of color. The group meets regularly to share ideas and resources and works together to host a diversity hiring fair in March.

In addition, the Assistant Superintendent attended both the job fair and a hiring workshop at the 34th Annual METCO Directors Conference.

District representatives also recruited at the <u>Milton High School Minority Educators Job Fair</u>, the <u>Lesley University Career Expo</u> and the <u>Massachusetts Educational Recruiting Consortium</u>.

Finally, we are in the process of gathering baseline demographic data in order to track our recruiting and retention efforts over time.

Highlighted Priority:

- 3.3 Expand efforts to help student navigate the technology-infused environment in a way that is safe, effective, health, and well-balanced.
- 3.3.1 Implement new responsible use curriculum in grade 5.

Westwood's elementary Instructional Technology Coaches (ITC's) have designed this curriculum unit and will deliver it in 5th grade classrooms towards the end of May and beginning of June. This unit focuses on preparing students to succeed in the take-home Chromebook program starting in 6th grade and includes the following four broad goals:

Goal 1: Students will be able to organize digital resources and demonstrate responsible use and care of devices.

<u>Goal 2</u>: Students will learn best practices for ensuring the safety and security of personal information.

<u>Goal 3</u>: Students will learn about the impact (positive and negative) of online communication.

Goal 4: Students will understand the legal and ethical obligations of participating in a digital world.

Parents were informed of this new program in early May. The email they received can be accessed at bit.ly/303ArT3.

3.3.2 Move grade 6 responsible use lessons into advisory program.

A new 6th grade advisory curriculum was implemented that dedicated several sessions to students' responsible use of Chromebooks and technology. Previously, these lessons were handled by the health teacher and the middle school Instructional Technology Coach (ITC). By shifting these lessons into advisory, we not only promoted the importance of these topics, but also set teachers up as partners with the health teacher and ITC as experts in the skills and strategies being taught.

Initial lessons included MyHomeworkApp, Aspen, and the physical care of Chromebooks - teachers were provided with how-to videos, slideshows, and suggestions for using and checking in with students about their ongoing use of digital resources.

6th grade advisory time was also dedicated to teaching students about the details and importance of our technology expectations, an awareness of good and bad technology habits, and the process and consequences for technology infractions.

The lessons about online teasing and bullying were updated from last year and continue to be shared in advisory and health classes. During advisory, students and teachers are provided with presentations, role playing scenarios, and discussion questions that span several sessions and topics.

This year, we made sweeping changes to how we approach the use of technology in grade 6. By the midpoint of the year, teachers had already begun to notice a significant positive shift with regard to off-task behavior, general care of the devices, and the use of Chromebook cases. We are planning on 'scaling up' this approach in grades 7 and 8 next year and expect to see similar results.

3.3.3 Expand offering of Securly monitoring application to parents of students in grades 6-12.

Parents received a Technology Update email last summer that included information about the Securly home filtering and monitoring parent portal. This letter can be accessed at bit.ly/2vQqdr3. This portal provides the option for parents to receive weekly reports of their child's at-home browsing activity and the ability to add additional restrictions (beyond those that are already set) to their child's Chromebook when he or she is using it at home. Currently, the parents of 361 students have registered for this service.

The Technology Department is also testing a new product that has real-time text, image, and video detection analysis that appears to be much more effective at blocking sites that are a source of distraction (i.e. games, streaming media, etc...) and objectionable content (i.e. pornography and other forms of adult content). We are considering implementing this solution to start the 2019 - 2020 school year. This product also has a parent portal with many of the same features available with our current solution.

3.3.4 Provide information and resources for parents about timely technology related topics.

Parents have received a number communications from the Technology Director such as the Technology Update email from last summer. Additionally, the district has offered parent programming on a number of technology related topics. Examples include:

Teaching Our Children to be Good Digital Citizens, Dr. Elizabeth Englander, who is the Director of Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC) at Bridgewater State University

Judge Baker Children's Center Speaker Series - Limit Setting in the Age of Technology: Effective Strategies for Kindergarten Through 8th Grade

3.3.5 Revise middle school 1:1 parent orientation program.

Our middle school 1:1 parent orientation program is designed to inform parents about the goals of our 1:1 program, to provide support to parents about our responsible use expectations for students, and to cover a number of logistical considerations. The topic of responsible use was expanded this year to inform parents about changes to how this instruction is happening in school (see 3.3.2), to provide parents with resources to manage responsible use at home, and to calibrate expectations between home and school.

3.3.6 Work with teachers to ensure that applications used for instruction meet FERPA and COPPA standards.

The Westwood Student Data Privacy Initiative is complete and set to be fully implemented at the beginning of the 2019 - 2020 school year. The goal of Westwood's privacy initiative is to provide a safe and secure online experience for students and staff while at the same time empowering them to leverage the best tools and resources to achieve academic success. There are several federal and state laws that govern student data privacy, and we have a legal obligation to abide by such laws. Additionally, in an era where issues of data privacy goes far beyond the classroom walls, it is imperative for staff to model good data security habits for our students.

Westwood has secured privacy contracts with dozens of vendors and approved the use of several more online resources as a result of our own assessment of specific vendor privacy policies in conjunction with legal advice from our district lawyer. To date, ninety resources are approved, or conditionally approved, for teacher use. Going forward, teachers must seek approval to use any online resource that requires the exchange of personally identifiable student information.

The Westwood Student Data Privacy Initiative website can be accessed at bit.ly/westwoodsdp.

Appendix A

Westwood Public Schools Strategy for District Improvement 2018-2021

VISION:

Graduates of the Westwood Public Schools are skilled, confident, curious, and kind: excited for their futures and ready to contribute to their communities

MISSION:

To prepare students for college, career, and civic life by providing rich and challenging curriculum, high-quality instruction, and authentic educational experiences

CORE VALUES:

Academic excellence and a commitment to improvement Curiosity and tenacity Respectful relationships in a caring, collaborative community

Objectives	2018-2019 Priorities
1. Meaningful Learning Experiences	 1.1 Continue to explore and implement inquiry-based STEM initiatives. 1.2 Expand and invest in programs and practices that provide authentic, student-centered learning. 1.3 Explore options for instructional time that integrate an ambitious educational vision with the developmental needs of students.
2. Coherent, Connected Curriculum	 2.1 Improve student reading and writing outcomes by aligning curriculum and instruction PreK - 12. 2.2 Promote coaching, peer observation and peer feedback within and across schools in order to help students progress toward learning goals from year to year/building to building without unnecessary repetition or gaps. 2.3 Develop a manageable approach to common assessment that provides educators, students and parents information about student learning
3. Healthy and Supported School Community	 3.1 Develop and implement a district wide plan for meeting students' social and emotional learning needs. 3.2 Implement programs and instructional practices that recognize and support the needs of students and families in an increasingly diverse community. 3.3 Expand efforts to help students navigate the technology-infused environment in a way that is safe, effective, healthy, and well-balanced.
4. Facilities for the Future	 4.1 Secure state financial support for a school building project. 4.2 Engage residents in open dialogue about the qualities of school facilities that will support the next generation of Westwood students. 4.3 Conduct a comprehensive security audit of facilities and protocols and begin to implement priority recommendations.

Appendix B

1. Meaningful Learning Experiences

1.1		Continue to explore and implement inquiry-based STEM initiatives.	Status, May 2019
	1.1.1	Complete final phase of new science curriculum implementation PreK-8 with an emphasis on inquiry based instructional practices	Complete
1	1.1.2	Refine middle school computer science and engineering curriculum	Substantial progress
1	1.1.3	Prepare to implement "biology first" high school course sequence in SY19-20	Complete
1	1.1.4	Continue expansion of modeling approach in high school Science courses	Substantial progress

1.2		Expand and invest in programs and practices that provide authentic, student-centered learning.	Status
1	2.1	Investigate options for expanding coding and makerspaces at the elementary level	Substantial progress
1	2.2	Refine J-Term for June 2019 based on the pilot feedback from teachers and students, and create structures to support regular renewal of course offerings	Complete
1	2.3	Implement a professional learning community of teacher leaders at TMS defining what authentic, student-centered learning means in terms of instructional practice.	Some progress

1.3	Explore options for instructional time that integrate an ambitious educational vision with the developmental needs of students.	Status
1.3.1	Review and revise preschool and K-5 Learning Time guidelines to create flexibility in lesson implementation (i.e. SEL, play, science inquiry)	Some progress
1.3.2	Develop a process and timeline for revising the middle school schedule to promote best middle level practices and programming.	Substantial progress

1.3.4 Review and respond to impact of J-Term timeline to high school students and staff.

Complete

2. Coherent, Connected Curriculum

2.1	Improve student reading and writing outcomes by aligning curriculum and instruction PreK-12.	Lead
2.1	Use PreK-12 English language arts and literacy curriculum review process to generate recommendations for improving curriculum and instruction	Substantial progress
2.1	2 Provide specialized instruction and co-teaching to support improved learning in ELA for students in sub separate programs at Thurston.	Complete
2.1	3 Expand middle school classroom libraries to increase student interest in reading appropriate and engaging texts (Just Right Books).	Complete

2.2	Promote coaching, peer observation and peer feedback within and across schools in order to help students progress toward learning goals from year to year/building to building without unnecessary repetition or gaps.	Status
2.2.1	Create structure and schedule for PreK to K and Grade 5 to 6 classroom visits and debriefing sessions.	Substantial progress
2.2.2	Restructure elementary science specialist time from building-based to grade-level based.	Complete
2.2.3	Ensure strategic learning priorities are focal point of conversations about instruction through professional development and feedback for evaluators and coaches.	Ongoing
2.2.5	Develop and promote peer observation and feedback (pilot using already established pineapple sign network).	Complete
2.2.6	Leverage teacher schedules to promote peer observation and feedback at the high school.	Complete

2.3	Develop a manageable approach to common assessment that provides educators, students and parents information about student learning.	Status
2.3.1	Refine and streamline common assessments PreK-12	Some progress
2.3.2	Develop data analysis tools that are most useful to teachers, coaches, and administrators.	Limited progress
2.3.3	Support the ongoing use of assessment data in conversations between teachers and coaches/evaluators.	Ongoing

3. Healthy and Supported School Community

3.1	Develop and implement a district wide plan for meeting students' social and emotional learning needs.	Status
3.1.1	Complete PK-12 social-emotional learning needs assessment and curriculum review.	Complete
3.1.2	Examine the balance between high-stakes assessment and students' social-emotional needs at the high school.	Some progress
3.1.3	Provide training and support for the K-5 STAR Program transition to Sheehan School.	Complete
3.1.4	Continue targeted professional development opportunities for staff around social-emotional learning.	Complete
3.1.5	Plan and provide parent workshop series on how to support social-emotional learning at home.	Complete
3.1.6	Implement the Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBRT) protocol at the middle school and high school (January through March 2019)	Complete
3.1.7	Reestablish the purpose and examine the structure of Advisory at the middle school.	Some progress

3.2	Implement programs and instructional practices that recognize and support the needs of students and families in an increasingly diverse community.	Status
3.2.1	Refine the "Courageous Conversations" series at Westwood High School.	Complete
3.2.2	Provide teacher training on navigating conversations about culturally-sensitive topics including topics of race.	Complete
3.2.3	Offer parent education series on talking with kids about race.	Complete

3.2.4	Continue expanding library collections.	Complete
3.2.5	Continue process of translating district documents into multiple languages that reflect the primary languages spoken by our families.	Substantial progress
3.2.6	Continue to incorporate school-based and classroom-based strategies for supporting LGBTQ students and families.	Substantial progress
3.2.7	Expand efforts to recruit, hire, and support a diverse staff.	Some progress

3.3	Expand efforts to help students navigate the technology-infused environment in a way that is safe, effective, healthy, and well-balanced.	Status
3.3.1	Implement new responsible use curriculum in grade 5.	Complete
3.3.2	Move grade 6 responsible use lessons into advisory program.	Complete
3.3.3	Expand offering of Securly monitoring application to parents of students in grades 6-12	Substantial progress /ongoing
3.3.5	Provide information and resources for parents about timely technology related topics.	Complete
3.3.6	Revise middle school 1:1 parent orientation program.	Complete
3.3.7	Work with teachers to ensure that applications used for instruction meet FERPA and COPPA standards.	Complete

4. Facilities for the Future

4.1	Secure state financial support for a school building project.	Status
4.1.1	Complete required elements during the MSBA Eligibility Phase in order to move into the Feasibility Study.	Complete
4.1.2	Work with School Building Committee to identify an Owner's Project Manager.	Complete
4.1.3	Complete the designer selection process in collaboration with MSBA.	Move to 2019-2020

4.2	Continue to engage residents to educate and build support for the the school building project process.	Status
4.2.1	Provide periodic updates to residents about the project status and next steps.	Complete
4.2.2	Engage residents in dialogue about the qualities of school facilities that will support the next generation of Westwood students.	Move to 2019-2020

4.3	Conduct a comprehensive security audit of facilities and protocols and begin to implement priority recommendations.	Status
4.3.1	Work with town officials to identify and hire a security consulting firm that understands the particular needs of schools.	Complete
4.3.2	Work with consultant to complete audit by the start of February 2019.	Complete
4.3.3	Begin to implement and/or plan for recommended changes and action steps.	Complete