WE BELIEVE...

- In Our Beautiful and Capable Students
- In Diversity and Inclusion
- In High Expectations for Our Students and Staff
- In Family, Staff, and Community Collaboration
- In Continuous Improvement and Systemic Accountability

OUR MISSION
To provide all our students with the learning and support they need to succeed in school and in life.

OUR VISION
All students will graduate prepared to transform our world.
A Message from Dr. Torres-Rodriguez

Dear Hartford Public Schools Community,

Hartford Public Schools is a dynamic, thriving community committed to providing educational equity to all students. Setting shared priorities and goals is an important part of working together as a community in service of student success. We began this work together in 2017 through community conversations that led to the creation of our District Model for Excellence (DME) and the 2018-2022 Strategic Operating Plan.

The Hartford community, through comprehensive engagement in 2017, identified four important priorities for our work. Our Board of Education adopted this plan in January 2018. The value of that work continues to guide us. As with any bold vision, achieving these goals will take time, and consistent attention to the priorities that have been named by our community. The efforts of our talented students, families and staff, coupled with our resilient community partnerships, are building a stronger school system and a promising future for our learners.

As we look out ahead to the next three years, it is now time to set our 2021-2024 Strategic Operating plan that describes our specific actions and performance indicators to measure our progress. We are revising our strategic operating plan not only because we are nearing the end of our previous three year plan, but also because the world around us has changed significantly. In the midst of implementing our prior three year plan, we quickly pivoted to respond to the global pandemic. I am honored to say that our community responded with grace and determination, even as many of us experienced loss and trauma as a result of the pandemic.

Our gains in academic performance were interrupted by the challenges from COVID-19. The global crisis, and increased awareness about racial and social inequities, also reinforced the importance of preparing ALL of our students for college, careers, and life after high school. While the pandemic has led to increased funds to support our work in the short term, previous budget challenges had forced tough choices about how we organize and staff our schools.

The new three-year plan is primarily funded through our general budget. However, significant investments for academic recovery, acceleration, and social-emotional needs are supported through 2024 with $144 million in federal COVID relief funding. The three-year plan was designed to incorporate all funding streams, including federal funds through an application for ESSER II (Elementary and Secondary Emergency School Relief Fund) -- approved by the Hartford BOE in April 2021 -- and an application for ESSER III (through the American Rescue Plan), which will be completed by Summer/Fall 2021.

In the Spring of 2021, thousands of our students, families, staff and community partners have generously connected with us in stakeholder sessions and surveys to identify what is most important for the future of our children’s education. Your feedback has been integrated into this new three-year strategic plan. Together, we remain committed to addressing the needs of the whole student and our four major priorities continue to guide our work:

1. High Quality Teaching and Learning
2. Welcoming Culture and Nurturing Climate
3. Engaging Family and Community Partnerships
4. Skillful Staff and Effective Operations

The pages that follow contain details of our plan. As a living document, we intend for it to be flexible and adjust in response to the evolving needs of our students. Our goals are many, our vision is bold. The future of our students is on track for recovery and success.

With gratitude for your partnership,

Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez
Superintendent of Schools
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Executive Summary

The District Model for Excellence (DME) continues to be our roadmap. It guides our progress to improve performance for our students and their bright futures. Informed by research and built upon the words and ideas from our community, this plan gives clear direction to our work.

Hartford Public Schools (HPS), like many urban districts, faces complex challenges. A district performance review in 2017 identified significant student needs. We recognized the academic, linguistic, social, emotional and performance challenges within and across student subgroups, noting gaps between district averages and the rest of Connecticut.

Despite declines in student enrollment that complicated persistent budget challenges and led to staff reductions and school closures, there were signs of encouragement. Early gains in 2018-19 gave us hope for consistent progress in closing gaps between Hartford’s school children and their suburban peers. Between 2017-18 and 2018-19 the district saw modest gains in middle school language arts and graduation rates. Our most exciting gain being an 8 percentage point increase in graduation rates for English Learners. The district’s coherent, universal improvement strategy opened the door for performance increases, under the steady leadership of the Superintendent.

Then, the arrival of the pandemic disrupted our progress, forcing a temporary but significant shift in our focus.

We have responded to the pandemic with care, flexibility, and innovation. New and renewed partnerships reinforce our efforts. While performance gaps between Hartford Students and their peers have expanded—amplified by the challenges of the pandemic—as we return to a new, post-pandemic normal, our refreshed plan will guide us forward.
The process for re-imagining our district, beginning in 2017, engaged school and community stakeholders to identify priorities for a new District Model for Excellence (DME). These priorities would guide our efforts to improve student outcomes and district operations. During hundreds of stakeholder meetings, several thousand stakeholders provided input on the new district model, which resulted in a restructuring plan for schools and the development of four priority areas and related objectives.

Our updated plan continues the work begun in 2017, valuing that guidance and extending it to reflect the feedback from 2,140 stakeholders collected this spring. Students, families, Board of Education members, staff, and community partners attended presentations, reviewed the priorities, and helped us further shape areas for strategic action.
## OUR PRIORITIES AND VISION STATEMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority 1. High Quality Teaching and Learning</th>
<th>Priority 2. Welcoming Culture and Nurturing Climate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepare students academically, leading to life, college, career, and success by taking bold action to understand and meet student needs in academic recovery and acceleration.</td>
<td>Cultivate a learning environment that is inclusive, innovative, collaborative, and engaging by ensuring buildings are safe, engaging learning environments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extend student learning opportunities through partnerships between school, home, and the community through engaged family and community partnerships.</td>
<td>Maintain a high level of operational effectiveness with skilled staff, modern facilities, financial integrity, and accountability systems.</td>
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How Stakeholder Feedback Informed the Three Year Plan

Guided by the District Model for Excellence and informed by feedback and hours of engagement with our community, our new three-year plan directly addresses the academic and social-emotional needs of all our students.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Feedback Themes</th>
<th>How this shows up in our Strategic Operating Plan</th>
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| Students          | ● High school students want **flexibility in how/when they learn** (especially with time to manage work/home responsibilities)  
                  | ● Need for **Mental health supports**                                            | ● **Evening school** for high schoolers (evenings and weekends)  
                  |                                                                                   | ● Investment in **mental health supports** - e.g. clinical staff/partnerships, wellness spaces, teacher Professional Learning on trauma-sensitive practices |
| Families          | ● Focus on **individual needs and tutoring**                                    | ● **Targeted group size reductions** for high-needs students (including high-dosage tutoring)  
                  | ● **Social-emotional and other non-academic** supports and enrichment             | ● **Wraparound supports** via the Community Schools Model and **increased mental health services**  
                  | ● **Prioritize school-based spending**                                          | ● 96% of planned ESSER II resources will play out in schools                     |
| Principals        | ● **Target investments based on student need**                                  | ● Investments to **re-engage students**                                                                         |
                  | ● Need strategies to **re-integrate students**, connect with kids                | ● **School-based Equity & Innovation Grants** with focus on enrichment, wellness, and relationships            |
                  | ● **Opportunities for flexible, school-based resources**                        | ● **Recruitment and retention bonuses** at high-need schools and hard-to-staff areas                             |
                  | ● Prioritize to deepen/expand **MTSS (multi-tiered system of support)** structures and implementation |                                                                                                             |
                  | ● Hiring **effective teachers** is a key barrier, esp. in hard-to-staff areas    |                                                                                                             |
| Board Members     | ● Prioritize teacher pipeline and recruitment (particularly POC)                | ● Partnership to expand the teacher pipeline                                                                |
                  | ● Invest in **family supports, education, partnerships** (eg. Parent & Caregiver Academy, financial management training, grant writing) | ● **Parent Academy** and expanded partnerships with Community Based Organizations (CBOs)                     |
| Community Partners| ● **Expand ways to engage**, communicate, and partner with families              | ● **New Communications platform** and tools, updated websites                                               |
                  | ● **Develop real world, authentic opportunities to extend learning**            | ● **Family, student and staff perspectives through surveys and focus groups**                                  |
                  |                                                                                   | ● **Career readiness learning opportunities**, such as internships, job shadowing and youth leadership programs |
Families shared what would need to be true for their child to be successful over the next three years:

“Ensuring our schools have high-quality teachers and staff to provide effective instruction in a safe and positive learning environment.”

“Resources to continue academic growth and extra-curricular activities to spark interest and engagement in learning.”

“Supportive environment as he learns and grows. Challenging him by meeting him at his level.”

“The students need access to arts and extra curriculars. Parents need to be included so we know how to support learning at home.”
District Goals and Performance Targets

There is undeniable complexity in our work. Responding with urgency and resources to current needs has to be balanced with addressing the longstanding gaps among our Hartford learners, and between them and their peers statewide. For this reason we have developed both major and secondary goals. Our major goals impact the immediate and significant needs of our learners to read at or above grade level; effectively demonstrate mathematical thinking; graduate high school within four years; and attend school regularly.
2021-2024 Major Goals:

1. Increase Average 4 year Cohort Graduation Rate to 83.2% or higher
2. At least 48.8% of Grade 3 students meeting Reading Proficiency as measured by SBAC
3. At least 27.3% of Grade 8 students meeting Mathematics Proficiency as measured by SBAC
4. Reduce chronic absenteeism to 12.9% or lower
2021-2024 Major Goals (continued)

Graduation Rate

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
<td>68.5%</td>
<td>79.7%</td>
<td>81.5%</td>
<td>83.2%</td>
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<td>Actual</td>
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Chronic Absenteeism

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
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</table>
2021-2024 Secondary Goals:

5. At least 68.2% of schools with ELA and Math Performance Indices* at 50 or Above
6. At least 67.8% of 11th graders enrolled in college-and-career readiness courses.
7. At least 85.3% of Freshmen on track to graduate with their cohort.

*Comprised of test scores, Performance Indices are generated by the Connecticut State Department of Education for English Language Arts, Math, and Science for each school and the district. Performance Indices are used to review equity in student performance based on demographic groupings, such as disability, free/reduced meals, or race and ethnicity.
2021-2024 Secondary Goals (continued)

*On Track refers to student readiness to transition to the next grade level and graduate from high school on time.
The Work of Our Strategic Operating Plan

With the priorities and goals of our strategic operating plan in place, HPS set out to identify what we will do over the next three years to realize the plan. The strategic operating plan was drafted by central office and school administrators, then shared with and modified based on feedback from parents, students, principals and staff, board members, School Governance Councils, community partners, and other stakeholders.

Each priority in our plan has a standard set of guiding elements that provide more specifics about how the district will achieve its priorities and major goals, as well as how we will measure progress along the way. They include a vision for the priority, core strategies, work streams and action steps, fidelity indicators, and annual measures of progress.

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<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Beliefs</th>
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<tr>
<td>Major Goals 2021-2024</td>
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<tr>
<td>Four Major Priorities and Vision Statements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Core Strategies</td>
<td>Fidelity Indicators</td>
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<tr>
<td>Workstreams and Actions</td>
<td>Annual Measures of Progress</td>
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</table>

**Vision Statements:** The vision for the priority identifies the breadth and depth of planned work within each priority.

**Core Strategies:** Overarching area of specific focus identified to address a district goal.

**Work Streams and Action Steps:** Specific, sequenced actions taken in response to prioritized needs.

**Fidelity Indicators:** Evidence demonstrating completion of action steps communicating progress.

**Annual Measures of Progress:** Data that communicates change over time.
## Priority 1 Overview: High Quality Teaching and Learning

Prepare students academically, leading to life, college, career, and success by taking bold actions to understand and meet student needs in academic recovery and acceleration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Example actions</th>
<th>Example student, family, and staff experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Implement and monitor Instructional Vision in service of the Portrait of a Graduate</td>
<td>- Align curriculum, instruction, assessments</td>
<td>- Updated curriculum and other instructional materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provide an academic system of support to ensure instruction, interventions, and enrichments meet the needs of all students (MTSS: Multi-tiered System of Supports)</td>
<td>- Implement MTSS identification process</td>
<td>- More small group and customized academic supports like tutoring</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>- Extended day/year calendar design</td>
<td>- Before-school, after-school, and school vacation week (&quot;intersession&quot;) learning and enrichment opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Standardized Special education support model</td>
<td>- More collaborative planning time and professional learning time for teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Standardized English learner support model</td>
<td>- Fewer out of district special education placements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Increase high school and post-secondary transition supports</td>
<td>- Bridge Program in Freshman Academy</td>
<td>- Support in the transition to high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Career readiness experiences in middle and high school</td>
<td>- Real world and career readiness learning and support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Academic and career advising</td>
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</table>
## Priority 2 Overview: Welcoming Culture and Nurturing Climate

Cultivate a learning environment that is inclusive, innovative, collaborative, and engaging by ensuring buildings are safe, engaging learning environments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Example actions</th>
<th>Example student, family, and staff experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Provide a **social/emotional system of support**, including interventions and enrichments, to meet the social, emotional, and physical needs of all students (MTSS: Multi-tiered System of Supports) | ● Implement social/emotional components of MTSS  
● School-wide attendance support  
● Continuum of athletic programs | ● Social/emotional support in all schools such as mentoring, trauma-informed practices  
● Consistent school-wide attendance team practices and supports  
● More robust athletic offerings |
| 2. Increase the accessibility to, and effective use of, technology to enhance both teaching and learning | ● Equitable education technology practices | ● Technology-enhanced instruction  
● Timely, equitable tech support for students and teachers |
## Priority 3 Overview:
### Engaging Family and Community Partnerships

Extend student learning opportunities through partnerships between school, home, and the community through engaged family and community partnerships.

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<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Example Actions</th>
<th>Example student, family, and staff experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. Expand and improve ways to engage, communicate, and partner with families and the community** | ● Expand Community Schools model  
● External communications plans and structures  
● Gather family, student, and staff perspectives on connectedness | ● More Community Schools and wraparound student/family support  
● New communications tools like updated school websites  
● Family, student, and staff surveys and focus groups |
| **2. Develop real-world, authentic opportunities to extend learning**     | ● Internships, job shadowing, and youth leadership programs  
● Family and community learning opportunities | ● Real world and career readiness learning experiences for students, like internships and job shadowing  
● Parent & Caregiver Academy for family learning opportunities |
# Priority 4 Overview:
Skillful Staff and Effective Operations

Maintain a high level of operational effectiveness through resource management of skilled staff, state-of-the-art facilities, high integrity financial practices and accountability systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Example Actions</th>
<th>Example student, family, and staff experiences</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1. Improve **employee recruitment, onboarding, development, leadership, and recognition** | • Grow capacity in Talent Management functions  
• Staff recruitment, retention, wellness initiatives  
• Comprehensive professional learning plans for all roles | • Teacher pipeline development, including teacher recruitment and retention bonuses for high-need roles and schools  
• Additional staff to support the full strategic operating plan, with topics including anti-racism and anti-bias professional learning, Instructional vision, Portrait of a Graduate, and more |
| 2. Enhance **collaboration** and teamwork to support innovation, collective inquiry, and **continuous improvement** | • Continuous improvement teams and practices district-wide  
• Data and Performance management system  
• Observational data collection tools and processes | • Data collection and analysis, following DataWise practices, and regular meetings in every school and department  
• Improved data infrastructure such as DecisionEd dashboards, which provide robust student and school data in real time. |
| 3. Ensure **facilities are equitably safe, secure, well-maintained, and appealing to students, families and staff** | • Facilities safety, maintenance, equity monitoring  
• Shared vision for school choice  
• Equity in school construction and design | • School facilities designed for 21st century teaching & learning  
• HPS specialized staff consult on school construction design to ensure spaces work for all student learning needs |
| 4. **Financial practices** compliment and fortify the strategic initiatives in | • Strengthen finance organization skills and processes | • Strengthen financial skills and processes  
• Continued equity-based school budgets and budgeting process using Allovue |
| alignment with the strategic plan | ● Maintain equitable, sustainable budgeting |
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DISTRICT PRIORITIES 2021 - 2024