



# REGULAR MEETING OF THE ABINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE

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Location: Abington Middle / High School Library Abington MA 02351

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Date: Tuesday, November 26, 2024

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Time: 6:30pm

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Dear Visitors:

Welcome to an open meeting of the Abington School Committee. This is the agenda that will be discussed this evening. Please note that the Hearing of Visitors is included; and if you have a statement or question, please be kind enough to wait to be recognized by the Chair and give your name and address.

Chris Coyle, Chair

**This meeting may be digitally recorded**

## **I. CALL OF MEETING TO ORDER AND FLAG SALUTE**

## **II. HEARING OF VISITORS**

## **III. READING AND APPROVAL OF RECORDS**

October 29, 2024

## **IV. REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT (DR. CHRISTOPHER BASTA)**

- a. History and Business Department Update (Jason Scott, Department Head)
- b. Abington Innovates Review

## **V. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT (DR. FELICIA MOSCHELLA)**

- a. Consideration of the Abington Public Schools' participation in the School Choice Program for the 2025-2026 school year in accordance with Chapter 76, The Education Reform Act of 1993.
- b. Strategic Planning
  - i. District Operations (Sarah Gainey - Director of Finance & Operations, Julie Thompson – BBES Principal)
  - ii. Communications (Rich Bykowski – Director of Technology, Annie Robinson – AEEP Director)

## **VI. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & OPERATIONS (SARAH GAINEY)**

- a. FY25 Salary and Expense Allocation

## **VII. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEXT SCHOOL COMMITTEE DATE**

**January 7, 2025, at 6:30pm / Budget Hearing at 6:30pm**

## **VIII. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

- READS FY24 Annual Performance Report
- **Dates to Remember**
  - 1. Wednesday, November 27<sup>th</sup> – Early Release
  - 2. Thursday, November 28<sup>th</sup> and Friday, November 29<sup>th</sup> - No School / Thanksgiving Break
  - 3. December 10<sup>th</sup> – SEPAC Basic Rights Workshop @ 6:30 AHS / AMS Library
  - 4. December 11<sup>th</sup> - Inservice / Early Release
  - 5. Monday, December 23<sup>rd</sup> – Wednesday, January 1, 2025 – No School -Holiday Break
- **Personnel Administration**
  - 1. On the recommendation of Jennifer Barresi, Principal of Woodsdale Elementary School, the superintendent approved the appointment of Samantha Johnson as a long-term substitute special education teacher (November to March 2025).
  - 2. On the recommendation of Annie Robinson, Director of Abington Early Education Program, the superintendent approved the appointment of Bruna Henriques, a paraprofessional, within Abington Public Schools.

3. On the recommendation of Matthew MacCurtain, Principal of Abington Middle School, the superintendent approved the appointment of the following BOOST tutors:

Susan Tirell  
Kerry Higgins  
Christine Beckvold  
Christine Compton  
Jenna Hanley (Paraprofessional)

4. On the recommendation of Jean Connon, Director of Food Services, the superintendent approved the appointment of Bridget Minnehan as cafeteria worker within Abington Public Schools.
5. The Superintendent has accepted the resignation of Dr. Elizabeth Gonsalves, Ph.D., English teacher, for purposes of retirement at the end of the 2025-2026 school year.
6. The Superintendent has accepted the resignation of Joan Smith, school nurse, for purposes of retirement at the end of November 2025.
7. The Superintendent has accepted the resignation of Katherine Naujalis, paraprofessional, for purposes of retirement at the end of the 2025-2026 school year.

## **IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

By roll call vote in accordance with MA G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(3) for the purpose of conducting strategy session for negotiations with AEA Units A and B and non-union personnel since, as declared by the Chair, to hold this discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee; and not to return to regular session.



# SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

## ABINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Location:  | A regular meeting of the School Committee was held in the Library at 201 Gliniewicz Way Abington Middle / High School, Abington MA 02351                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Date/Time: | Tuesday, October 29, 2024 at 6:30pm                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Present:   | Mr. Chris Coyle, Chair; Ms. Danielle Grafton, Vice-Chair; Ms. Heidi Hernandez, Secretary; Ms. Pamela Neely and Ms. Melanie Whitney, Members. Also in attendance were Dr. Felicia Moschella, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Christopher Basta, Assistant Superintendent; Ms. Danielle Gaylor, Executive Secretary, and Anna Brown, Student Representative |

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## MEETING MINUTES

### I. CALL OF MEETING TO ORDER AND FLAG SALUTE

### II. HEARING OF VISITORS

None

### III. READING AND APPROVAL OF RECORDS

September 24, 2024:

**VOTED: On the motion of Danielle Grafton (Melanie Whitney) the Committee unanimously voted to approve the meeting minutes of September 24, 2024, as presented.**

### IV. REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT (DR. CHRISTOPHER BASTA)

- a. Report on 2023-2024 MCAS Results – Dr. Basta, Dr. Gonsalves, Ms. Doherty and Ms. Corbett reviewed the MCAS results for Math, Science and ELA for all grade levels. They shared areas of strengths, and their recommendations for areas of improvement.

The data was compared to previous year's results as well as the State MCAS results.

- b. Abington Innovates Update - Dr. Basta reviewed the outline of the November 5th professional development day, *Abington Innovates*

## **V. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES (DR. JAMES ROBBINS)**

2024-2025 Additional Home Education Program Requests:

***VOTED: On the motion of Danielle Grafton (Heidi Hernandez) the Committee unanimously voted to approve the Home Education Programs for the 2024-2025 School year as recommended by Dr. Robbins.***

## **VI. PRINCIPALS' REPORT (MATTHEW MACCURTAIN, PRINCIPAL, ABINGTON MIDDLE SCHOOL)**

Mr. MacCurtain asked the Committee to consider an Out-of-State Field Trip to Washington, D.C. for the Abington Middle School, Grade 8 students on June 5-7, 2025.

***VOTED: On the motion of Heidi Hernandez (Pam Neely) the Committee unanimously voted to approve the out-of-state field trip to Washington, D.C. for the Abington Middle School Grade 8 students from June 5-7, 2025, as presented.***

## **VII. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT (DR. FELICIA MOSCHELLA)**

Strategic Planning – Dr. Moschella reviewed the Objectives and the Initiatives of the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan. Last Spring there were 4 objectives that were identified. Teaching and Learning, Communication, Culture and Inclusion and District Operations.

The implementation of these initiatives and objectives will be discussed over the next few School Committee meetings. Tonight's meeting focused on Teaching and Learning (led by Dr. Basta and Jonathan Bourn) and Culture & Inclusion (led by Dr. Robbins and Jennifer Barresi)

The **Teaching and Learning** objective and initiative are as follows:

**Strategic Objective:** Improve student outcomes through vertically and horizontally aligned curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

**Strategic Initiative:** 1.1 Clearly articulate how the APS mission, vision, and guiding principles improve student outcomes.

The **Culture and Inclusion** objective and initiative are as follows:

**Strategic Objective:** Improve inclusive procedures and practices to increase academic success, social-emotional learning, and engagement for all students.

**Strategic Initiative:** 3.1 Sustain and expand inclusive practices and training for all staff to benefit diverse learners.

## **VIII. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEXT SCHOOL COMMITTEE DATE**

**November 26, 2024, at 6:30pm**

## **IX. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

- Letter from BSU Department of Music
- Marching Band State Championships
- **Dates to Remember**
  1. Tuesday, November 5 - Inservice / Election Day No School
  2. Monday, November 11 - No School / Veteran's Day Observed
  3. Wednesday, November 13 - Abington Education Foundation (AEF) Board Meeting – Town Hall @7pm
- **Personnel Administration**
  1. On the recommendation of Matthew MacCurtain, Principal of Abington Middle School, the superintendent approved the appointment of Kathryn Goldberg as a paraprofessional for the 2024-2025 school year.
  2. On the recommendation of Matthew MacCurtain, Principal of Abington Middle School, the superintendent approved the appointment of Amy Slate Fridhi as a long-term substitute (November -January).
  3. On the recommendation of Matthew MacCurtain, Principal of Abington Middle School, the superintendent approved the appointment of Rachel Collins as a long-term substitute (November).
  4. On the recommendation of Jennifer Barresi, Principal of Woodsdale Elementary School, the superintendent approved the appointment of Mary O'Neil as a lunch / recess paraprofessional for the 2024-2025 school year.

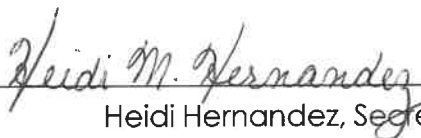
5. The Superintendent has accepted the resignation of Paula Avery as a Cafeteria Worker within the Abington Public Schools.
6. The Superintendent has accepted the resignation of Julie Fratus as a Cafeteria Worker within the Abington Public Schools.

## **X. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 7:58 p.m.

***VOTED: The School Committee, by roll call vote in accordance with MA G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(3) for the purpose of conducting strategy session for negotiations with AEA Units A and B and non-union personnel since, as declared by the Chair, to hold this discussion in open session may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee; and not to return to regular session 7:58p.m.***

**Yes: Mr. Coyle  
Ms. Grafton  
Ms. Neely  
Ms. Hernandez  
Ms. Whitney**

  
Heidi Hernandez, Secretary



# **ABINGTON HIGH SCHOOL**

**Mr. Jonathan Bourn  
Principal**

**Ms. Kate Casey  
Assistant Principal**

**This is Hard Work!  
You can do it!  
I will help You!**

# FRIDAY, 10/11 – Half Day

|          |                    |
|----------|--------------------|
| Homeroom | 7:25 am – 7:30 am  |
| Period 1 | 7:33 am – 7:58 am  |
| Period 2 | 8:01 am – 8:26 am  |
| Period 3 | 8:29 am – 8:54 am  |
| Period 4 | 8:57 am – 9:22 am  |
| Period 5 | 9:25 am – 9:50 am  |
| Period 6 | 9:53 am- 10:18 am  |
| Period 7 | 10:21 am- 10:46 am |



# Dates to Know

**October 11: Parent Conferences**

**October 11: Picture Retakes**

**October 11: Early Release**

**October 14: No School**

**October 16-17: Winter Sports Interest Meetings**

**October 17: Green Wave Gazette Meeting**

**October 20: Booster Door to Door Drive**

**October 23: Wave Week Wednesday**

**October 24: Homecoming Game**

**October 25: Homecoming Dance**

# PARENT CONFERENCES

**Parent Conferences continue on Friday October 11th 11:30am - 2:00pm** for in person or remote conferences. Remote meetings will be done with Microsoft Teams.

Use Microsoft Booking to schedule your conference.

<https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/AbingtonHighSchool@student.abingtonps.org/bookings/>



# SOCKTOBER

The Student Council is collecting socks for the month of October. Each night in the United States, an estimated 600,000 people live on the streets. A small act of love, such as donating a pair of socks, can make a big difference in the lives of our neighbors who are homeless. Sock donation box is located in the main office. Socks will be donated to Father Bill's and Mainspring in Brockton.

# HOMECOMING DANCE

## Tickets on sale 10/14-18

Anyone planning on attending the AHS 2024 Homecoming Dance needs a **behavior contract** signed and turned in to purchase a ticket. Behavior contracts will be distributed in homeroom and located in the main office beginning today.

Tickets will be on sale at lunch from October 14<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup>. Hand in your contract and your \$10.00 when tickets are sold. The dance will be on October 25<sup>th</sup> from 7:00-9:00pm.

# WINTER SPORTS INTEREST MEETINGS

Winter sport interest meetings for students in grades 9-12 will be held Wednesday 10/16 and Thursday 10/17.

Students are encouraged to register [ASAP through Arbiter Sports using this link.](#)

# WINTER SPORTS INTEREST MEETINGS

## **Wednesday 10/16 at 2 PM**

Boys Basketball: Seminar Room

Girls Basketball: 1218

Boys Ice Hockey: 1216

## **Wednesday 10/16 at 2:30 PM**

Boys & Girls Indoor Track: Room 2104 (MS)

## **Thursday 10/17 at 2 PM**

Cheerleading: Seminar Room

Students interested in Girls Ice Hockey (co-op with Norwell and Scituate) should email Coach Dinger at [vdinger@rocklandschools.org](mailto:vdinger@rocklandschools.org) or see Mr. Serino with any questions.

# GREEN WAVE GAZETTE

The first meeting of the  
Green Wave Gazette Club  
is on Thursday 10/17  
after school 2:00 – 2:45pm  
in Mr. Cutter's room, 2218.

# BOOSTER DOOR TO DOOR DRIVE - Sunday 10/20

Student athletes are reminded the annual booster door to door drive is being held Sunday 10/20.

Student volunteers should arrive to Town Hall at 10:30AM where they will get a route and work with the Green Wave Boosters.

Any questions please contact Booster President Joanne Pease – [j.pease04@gmail.com](mailto:j.pease04@gmail.com) .

# ESSAY / VIDEO / ART CONTEST

The Historical Society of Old Abington (Abington, Rockland, Whitman) is holding its annual historical essay/video/art contest. The contest is open to all, including high school students. Contestants may submit an historical essay, a personal remembrance, an original video, or a work of art.

The first-place winner will be awarded \$200 and a year's (2025-2026) free membership in the HSOA.

Entries must be sent/postmarked by January 31, 2025, and may be mailed to Historical Society of Old Abington, 28 Centre Ave., Abington, MA 02351 or dropped at the Dyer Memorial Library at 28 Centre Ave. in Abington. Entries also may be emailed as a pdf to [HSOAEssay@gmail.com](mailto:HSOAEssay@gmail.com)

The winner will present their work at a meeting of the HSOA. Several people may work together to submit an entry; however, the award in this case will be split among the authors. Entries will be judged by members of the Historical Society of Old Abington.

Click here for details: [HSOA Essay 2025.pdf](#)

**COME AND  
JOIN US!**

## **Academic Center for Enrichment (A.C.E)**

The program will run from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays. Join Mr. Grijalva in room 2205 after school.

Email or see Mr. Grijalva with any questions.

Upcoming dates:

***October 16, 21, 23, 28, 30***

# GUIDANCE NEWS

## College Information Sessions

The following colleges will be giving an information session about their school and application process during bridge block in the seminar room.

If you are interested in any of these colleges or would just like to hear how some colleges go about their admissions process, please sign up with your mentor or email your guidance counselor to add you to the list.

# College Information Sessions

Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences: October 25, 2024 During Bridge Block in the Seminar Room

Stonehill College: October 30, 2024 During Bridge Block in the Seminar Room

Bridgewater State University: November 8, 2024 During Bridge Block in the Seminar Room

Curry College: November 18, 2024 During Bridge Block in the Seminar Room

# LOST AND FOUND

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If you are missing a personal item, please check the **lost and found** in the Main Office.

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Any leftover items will be donated at the end of each week.



# **STRATEGIC PLAN**

## **2024-2029**

## MISSION

The mission of the Abington Public Schools is to provide all students with relevant, challenging educational experiences to prepare them to be engaged, responsible citizens and members of the global community.

## VISION

The Abington Public School District, in partnership with families and the community, is a model school system that provides opportunities for all students to think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, and act responsibly to achieve their highest potential in academics, arts, and athletics. We provide state-of-the-art resources for teaching and learning, technology, and facilities in an environment that is safe and supportive, enabling students to become life-long learners. Our students are prepared to face the challenges of the future in an ever-changing world.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We believe in...

- making decisions in the best interests of students.
- supporting all students in achieving success.
- fostering the physical, intellectual, technological, social, emotional, and artistic development of our students.
- creating a safe, supportive, organized, and equitable learning environment.
- providing challenging educational experiences that build character.
- developing self-discipline and personal responsibility.
- promoting creativity, problem-solving, effective communication, and critical thinking skills.
- cultivating the educational partnership among home, school, and community.
- nurturing a culture of collaboration, collegiality, acceptance, and mutual respect.
- inspiring all students to become lifelong learners.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

| Teaching & Learning                                                                                           | Communication                                                | Culture & Inclusion                                                                                                                  | District Operations                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Improve student outcomes through vertically and horizontally aligned curriculum, instruction, and assessment. | Enhance methods and practices for home-school communication. | Improve inclusive procedures and practices to increase academic success, social-emotional learning, and engagement for all students. | Facilities and district operations provide high-quality, safe teaching and learning opportunities for all students, staff, and families. |

|  | STRATEGIC INITIATIVES                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                |
|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | 1.1 Clearly articulate how the APS mission, vision, and guiding principles improve student outcomes.                                                                                               | 2.1 Update centralized system and practices for home-school communication for classrooms, buildings, and the district. | 3.1 Sustain and expand inclusive practices and training for all staff to benefit diverse learners.                                                    | 4.1 Maintain innovative and physically safe schools by implementing best practices and preventative measures.                  |
|  | 1.2 Develop school-based, age-based end of year expectations linked to the AHS Vision of the Graduate.                                                                                             | 2.2 Review and revise communication practices for active & resolved emergencies in conjunction with local authorities. | 3.2 Refine and align Social, Emotional Learning (SEL) classroom practices for all students to develop their social-emotional skills and competencies. | 4.2 Enhance and diversify hiring and retention practices using an equity lens.                                                 |
|  | 1.3 Update the procedure for writing, revising, and implementing a vertically and horizontally aligned curriculum.                                                                                 | 2.3 Refine methods and practices for consistent school to home communication within and across schools and classrooms. | 3.3 Increase family awareness of opportunities to be involved in school-based activities.                                                             | 4.3 Develop a committee to evaluate infrastructure and make recommendations based on current and future teaching and learning. |
|  | 1.4 Refine and align existing Response to Intervention (RtI) practices to implement a P-12 Multi- Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) adhering to DESE guidance to improve outcomes for all students. |                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                       | 4.4 Review and refine long-term, sustainable budget strategies to address district needs.                                      |

## Action Plan – Communication

SY2024-2025

*Team Leaders: Annie Robinson & Rich Bykowski*

**Strategic Objective:** Enhance consistent centralized systems, methods, and practices for improved home-school communication with internal communication within and between schools.

**Strategic Initiative:** 2.1 Update centralized system and practices for home-school communication for classrooms, buildings, and the district.

**Implementation:** The administrative team will collaborate to refine/update/align systems and methods of home-school communication at the classroom, building, and district levels.

| Action Step                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Person(s) Responsible | Timeline   | Early Evidence of Change                                       | Status    | Resources                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Selection and implementation of communication platform                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Admin Team            | 8/24-10/24 | Implementation (including training) of communication platform  | Completed | Funding new platform                                       |
| Assessment of Current Practices: Evaluate the existing practices for home-school communication across classrooms, grade levels, buildings, and the district. This assessment should identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.                               | Admin Team            | FY25       | Consistent, predictable communication between home and schools | Ongoing   | Time during administrative team meetings                   |
| Establish Communication Protocols: Develop clear protocols and guidelines for how communication should be conducted using the new platform. This includes expectations for frequency, content, language, and response times at the classroom, building, and district levels. | Admin Team & Staff    | FY25       | Consistent, predictable communication between home and schools | Ongoing   | Departmental and faculty meetings and PD days for training |
| Training and Support: Provide training and ongoing support to teachers, staff, and families on how to use the communication platform effectively. This may include in-person workshops, online tutorials, user guides, and help desk support.                                | IT Dept.              | Ongoing    | Consistent, predictable communication between home and schools | Ongoing   | Departmental and faculty meetings and PD days for training |

## Action Plan – District Operations

**SY2024-2025**

*Team Leaders: Sarah Gainey & Julie Thompson*

**Strategic Objective:** Facilities and district operations provide high-quality, safe teaching and learning opportunities for all students, staff, and families.

**Strategic Initiative:** 4.1 Maintain innovative and physically safe schools by implementing best practices and preventative measures.

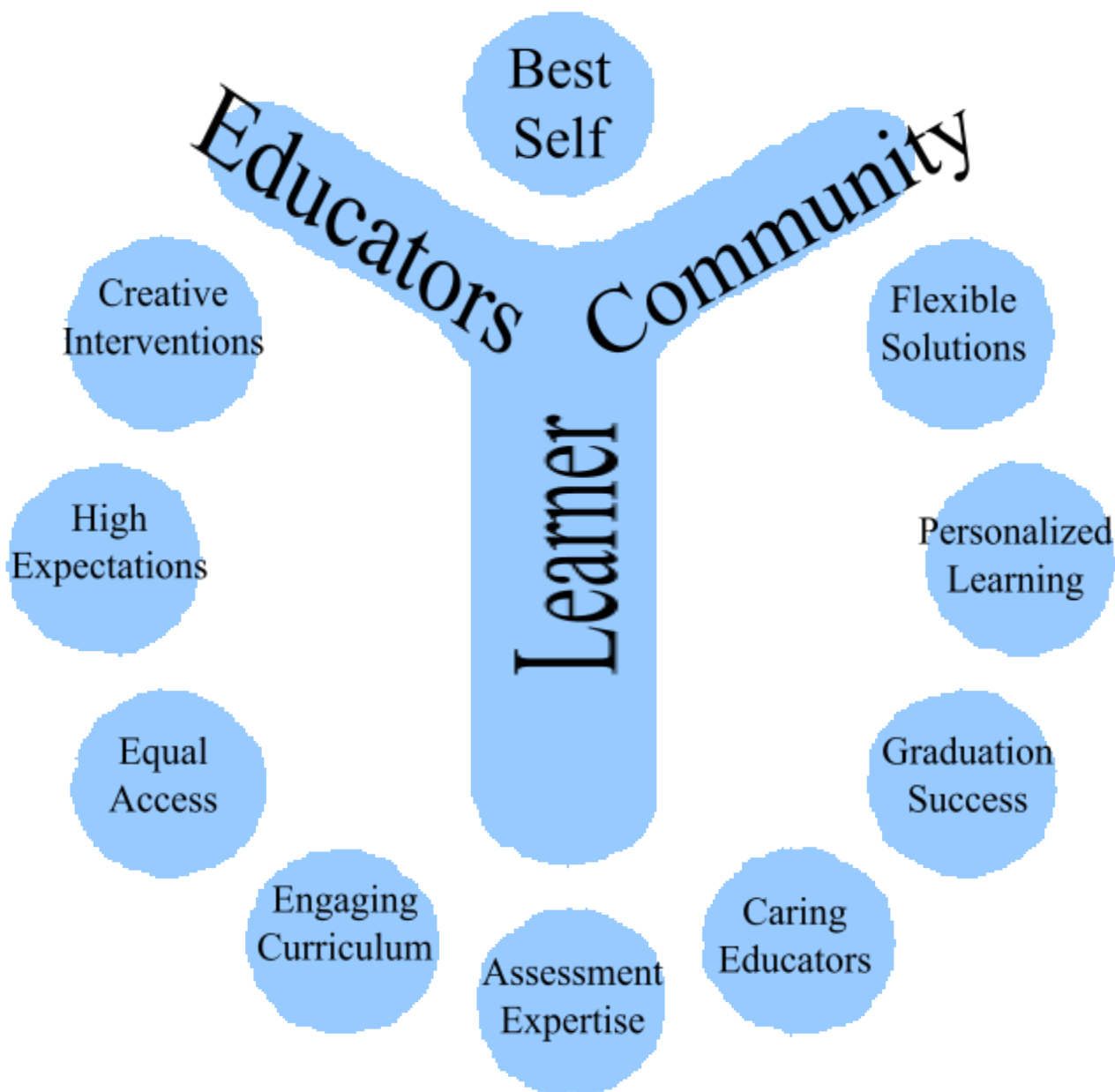
**Implementation:** The initiative to maintain innovative and physically safe schools by implementing best practices and preventative measures will be executed through a multi-faceted approach. The initiative aims to proactively enhance the safety and security of schools, ensuring they remain innovative learning environments while prioritizing the well-being of students, staff, and visitors.

| Action Step                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Person(s) Responsible         | Timeline | Early Evidence of Change                                                 | Status  | Resources                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Regular training sessions and drills will be conducted within each school to prepare staff and students for emergency situations, such as active shooter incidents (ALICE) and fire emergencies. These drills will ensure that everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in a crisis and knows how to respond effectively.                   | Admin Team                    | ongoing  | Schedule of safety drills & staff familiarity with practices & protocols | Ongoing | ALICE materials/ trainings, departmental and faculty meeting time |
| As part of their onboarding process, all new hires in the school system will receive training in the ALICE protocol to familiarize them with the emergency procedures and ensure they are prepared to respond appropriately in crisis situations.                                                                                                        | Admin Team                    | ongoing  | Schedule of safety drills & staff familiarity with practices & protocols | Ongoing | Departmental and faculty meeting time                             |
| Following any drills or real emergencies, there will be a thorough review of actions taken and outcomes achieved. This reflection process will involve consultation with local authorities and relevant town departments to identify areas for improvement and implement necessary remediation measures to enhance safety protocols.                     | Admin Team & Town Departments | ongoing  | Recommendations to improve practices, procedures, and physical plant     | Ongoing | Time to collaborate with town departments                         |
| The physical infrastructure of each school will be evaluated by relevant authorities including the Abington Fire Department (AFD), Abington Police Department (APD), building inspector, and the Director of Maintenance. This evaluation will identify potential safety hazards and vulnerabilities, allowing for prompt remediation to mitigate risks. | Admin Team & Town Departments | ongoing  | Recommendations to improve practices, procedures, and physical plant     | Ongoing | Time to collaborate with town departments                         |

# **November 2024 Annual Report for 23-24**

***READS Collaborative***

*Promoting the success and well-being of every learner since 1974*



## ***Regional Educational Assessment and Diagnostic Services (READS) Collaborative***

***105 East Grove St., Middleborough, MA 02346***

*READS Collaborative's mission is to provide creative, flexible solutions that promote the success and well-being of each child, adolescent and adult learner.*

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



## Approved by the Board on Thursday, November 14, 2024

*READS Collaborative* is a multi-purpose, public organization established under Chapter 40 of the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that specializes in the development of regional programs and services for school-age children with disabilities. READS is governed by a Board of Directors that is composed of the school superintendents from each of the 20 Member Districts.

### *Leadership at READS Collaborative*

**READS Collaborative is governed by a Board of Directors which consists of the superintendent from each Member District.**

#### **Executive Committee as of December 2024**

*President* – Jeffrey Schoonover, Superintendent, Somerset and Somerset-Berkley Regional

*Vice-President* – Carolyn Lyons, J.D., Superintendent, Middleborough

*Secretary/Clerk* – Melissa Ryan, Superintendent, Berkley

- Felicia Moschella, Ph.D., Superintendent, Abington
- Paula Bailey, Ed.D., Superintendent, Acushnet
- Ryan Powers, Superintendent, Bridgewater-Raynham Regional
- Alexandre Magalhaes, Ed.D., Superintendent, Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical
- Priya Tahiliani, Ed.D., Superintendent, Brockton
- Scott Knief, Superintendent, Carver
- William Runey, III, Superintendent, Dighton-Rehoboth Regional
- Elizabeth Legault, Superintendent, East Bridgewater
- Alan Strauss, Superintendent, Freetown-Lakeville Regional
- Michael Nelson, Superintendent, Marion, Mattapoisett, Rochester
- Jennifer O'Neill, Ed.D., Superintendent, Norton
- John Cabral, Superintendent, Taunton
- Mark Bodwell, Superintendent, West Bridgewater
- Jeffrey Szymaniak, Superintendent, Whitman-Hanson Regional

#### **Special Education Administrators Advisory Committee**

- James Robbins., Abington
- Kimberli Bettencourt, Acushnet
- Melissa Abrego, Berkley
- Melanie Hart, Bridgewater-Raynham Regional
- Amy Cohen, Bristol-Plymouth Regional
- Jami Langley, Brockton
- Melissa Leary, Carver
- Marie-Juanita Digioia, Dighton-Rehoboth Regional
- John Phelan, East Bridgewater
- Kelly Steele, Freetown-Lakeville Regional
- Jamie Curley, Ed.D., Marion, Mattapoisett, and Rochester
- Jennifer Healy, Middleborough

- Cassandra Russo, Norton
- Megan Ashton, Somerset and Somerset-Berkley Regional
- Amy Moynihan, Taunton
- Kathleen Marble, West Bridgewater
- Christine Godino, Whitman Hanson Regional

**READS Collaborative Administration as of December 2024**

- Dina Medeiros, M.Ed. C.A.G.S., Executive Director
- Lindsey Albernaz, CPA, Business Manager
- Michelle Holden, Administrative Assistant to the Executive Director
- Bethany Estrella, Ed.D., OTD, Coordinator, District Services
- Erinn Fauteux, Program Director, READS Academy PreK-12+
- Rebekah Marchilena, Program Director, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program
- John Dorn, Psy.D., Neuropsychologist
- Christine Shea, Technology Director
- Linda Woodcock, Clinic Manager

**READS Collaborative Treasurer** – Patrick Meagher

## ***READS Collaborative Mission Statement***

***The mission of READS Collaborative is to provide creative, flexible solutions that promote the success and well-being of each child, adolescent and adult learner.***

### ***Guiding Beliefs and Core Values***

- **RESPECT** for each other through strong connections to students and families fosters active engagement in the student's education.
- **ENCOURAGEMENT** of a sense of belonging and responsibility for the community is essential to student social and emotional well-being.
- **ACHIEVEMENT** promotes a sense of comfort, confidence and growth when an individual's needs are met. Continuous assessment of programs and services assures student learning, achievement and growth.
- **DETERMINATION** is an essential trait to cultivate in order for students to contribute to an increasingly diverse, complex, technological, and rapidly changing global society.
- **SUCCESS** of the students, and the organization, is accomplished through a respectful approach to shared decision-making, meaningful encouragement, recognition of achievement and determination to continuously improve.

### ***Vision Statement***

- Students acquire skills to foster academic and linguistic growth and strengthen social, emotional, and physical well-being in a safe, healthy, supportive and inviting learning environment. The staff of **READS**

**Collaborative** takes pride in the fact that students recognize that the entire staff respects them, encourages them to reach their potential and supports them in the achievement of their goals.

- **READS Collaborative** emphasizes determination as the key to achieving academic growth and to preparing for a successful transition to a general education setting, higher education or vocation, and a productive adult life.
- **READS Collaborative** continues to utilize the highly specialized educators, administrators, clinicians, therapists and assistants who work diligently to improve the educational outcomes and promote successes for children, adolescents and adults. **READS Collaborative** continues to provide these individualized, caring, educational settings and services to students through the collaboration of member districts.

READS Collaborative is a non-profit, public educational organization that specializes in the development of regional educational programs for children with low incidence disabilities. READS Collaborative provides diagnostic services, therapeutic services, assistive technology consultation, summer programming and professional development throughout the region. READS Collaborative provides comprehensive educational programming for students with emotional and/or social challenges and students who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing.

READS Collaborative is focused on the mission to *provide creative, flexible solutions that promote the success and well-being of each child, adolescent and adult learner*. READS Collaborative provides individualized, caring educational settings and services for students with disabilities through the collaboration of 20 Member Districts. This collaboration results in cost savings to Member Districts and provides individualized support and interventions that districts may not be able to provide on their own.

READS Collaborative builds connections between students, families, school districts and community services. READS Collaborative improves the educational outcomes for children and families of area communities by providing services through a highly specialized, trained staff of educators, administrators, therapists and assistants. Students participate in educational experiences at READS Collaborative that improve their opportunities for passing state tests, receiving a high school diploma and exploring options for higher education or employment.

## *Information on Programs and Services Provided by the Collaborative*

### *General Statistics*

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- READS Collaborative was established in 1974
- Years in Service – 50
- Employees – 179
- 20 Member Districts:
  - Abington, Acushnet, Berkley, Bridgewater-Raynham Regional, Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical High School, Brockton, Carver, Dighton-Rehoboth Regional, East Bridgewater, Freetown-Lakeville Regional, Marion, Mattapoisett, Norton, Middleborough, Rochester, Somerset, Somerset-Berkley Regional, Taunton, West Bridgewater, Whitman-Hanson
- Total Member and Non-Member Districts Served – 20 Members, 35+ Non-Members

### *Programs Sites*

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Norton, West Bridgewater, Middleborough, Taunton (Bristol-Plymouth VTHS)

## Enrollment

- READS Academy – 96 students
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program – 52 students
- Family Success Partnership – 75 families
- District Services - approximately 500

## Programs and Services Provided to Member and Non-Member Districts

|                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ● Administrative Mentoring                                                                                                                                           |
| ● Alternative Education/Therapeutic Intervention Program PreK -12+ Public Day Program - <b>READS Academy Program</b>                                                 |
| ● Assistive Technology Assessments and Consultation                                                                                                                  |
| ● Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Assessments and Consultation                                                                                      |
| ● Clinical Evaluations (Neuropsychological, Risk Assessments, Personality, Psycho-educational)                                                                       |
| ● <b>Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Program</b> (PreK-12+)                                                                                                                 |
| ● <b>District Services</b> (Therapeutic Intervention and Multi-Disciplinary Support)                                                                                 |
| ● Early Intervention – Specialized Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (birth to 3)                                                                                    |
| ● Educational Audiology Services (Central Auditory Processing Assessment, Educational Audiology Consultation, Environmental Assessment, and Audiological Assessment) |
| ● Family Success Partnership (Wraparound Services)                                                                                                                   |
| ● Grant Applications, as a collaboration of districts                                                                                                                |
| ● In-District Program Consultation                                                                                                                                   |
| ● Program Evaluations and Consultation to School Districts                                                                                                           |
| ● Program Evaluation                                                                                                                                                 |
| ● Professional Development                                                                                                                                           |
| ● Social Emotional Learning and Behavioral Health Consultation                                                                                                       |
| ● Summer Programs                                                                                                                                                    |
| ● Teacher of the Deaf Services (Consultation, Direct Service, Observational and Standardized Assessment, and Functional Listening Evaluation)                        |

**Staff Demographics** *\*Indicates part-time or per diem staff*

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| <b>Administrators/Directors</b><br>Executive Director (1)<br>Business Manager (1)<br>Program Directors (3)<br>Assistant Program Director (Academy)(1)<br>Technology Director (1)<br>Clinical Directors (Academy)(2)<br>DHH Team Chair (1)<br>Clinic Manager (1) | 11  | <b>Administrative Support Personnel</b><br>Administrative Assistant to Executive Director (1)<br>Human Resources Coordinator (1)<br>Accounts Payable and Receivable Coordinator (1)<br>Administrative Secretary (1)<br>Administrative Secretary to District Services Director (1)<br>Admissions Coordinator - Academy (1)<br>Technology Support Specialist (1)<br>*Interpreter Coordinator - DHH (.5)<br>*Payroll Clerk (.5)<br>*Transcriptionist (.2) | 8.2  |
| Educators – includes Special Education classroom teachers, Teachers of the Deaf, Reading Specialists, *Art, *Music and PE teachers, etc.                                                                                                                        | *35 | Special Education Secretaries<br>Program Secretaries                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 4    |
| Teacher Assistants – includes Assistant Teachers and 1 to 1 support                                                                                                                                                                                             | 42  | Counselors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 11   |
| *Occupational Therapists & Assistants                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 6   | Nurses                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 2    |
| *Physical Therapists & Assistants                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 5   | Family Success Partnership Social Workers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 3    |
| *Speech/Language Pathologists & Assistants                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 8   | *American Sign Language Interpreters                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 14.5 |
| *Clinical Psychologists                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 3   | School Psychologists                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 3    |
| *Audiologist                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 1   | Bus Driver                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 0    |
| *Assistive Technology and AAC Specialist                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 1   | Substitutes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 18   |
| Facilities Manager                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 1   | Treasurer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | .5   |

***Progress toward Achieving the Objectives and Purposes Set forth in the Collaborative Agreement and Strategic Plan***

The **READS Collaborative Agreement** sets forth the purpose of the collaborative as:

*“The Collaborative shall conduct and/or provide programs and/or services for, but not limited to, special needs children, needs assessment and recommendations, and in-service education. In addition, the Collaborative shall provide*

*diagnostic testing, evaluation, and recommendation in a variety of areas, including, but not limited to, medical, psychological, educational, audiological, ophthalmological, speech and language, and physical and occupational therapy. Such programs and/or services shall maximize cost efficiency and program effectiveness through a collaborative effort.*

*The focus of READS Collaborative is the provision and creation of special education programs and services in the least restrictive environment, the provision of diagnostic assessments for children within the local communities, and the delivery of professional development for educators.*

*The overall objectives of READS Collaborative are:*

- 1. to complement the educational programs and services of districts in a cost-effective manner;*
- 2. to improve the academic growth of students;*
- 3. to provide a range of diagnostic educational assessments for local districts;*
- 4. to offer quality professional development opportunities to general and special education teachers and related service providers; and*
- 5. to expand programs and services in a manner consistent with the needs of the Member Districts.”*

The **READS Collaborative Strategic Plan** for 2021 -2024 sets forth the following priorities.

- Plan for the safety and wellbeing of students and staff during and following the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Promote social justice and improvement in practices that impact equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Enhance programs and services to better serve the students and families, our staff, and the member districts.
- Maintain cost effective programs and services in a manner that supports the fiscal health of the collaborative in the aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

## **Residual Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic**

The 23-24 school year continued to be impacted by staff absences due, in part, to Covid-19 quarantine requirements of 5 days from a positive result through the majority of the school year.

The challenge has continued to be felt by all educators with regard to the significant increase in the social/emotional and mental health challenges that students are presenting. The high need for mental health services outside of school continues for our students. READS is in a similar position to other collaboratives of continuing with placement of students who ordinarily would qualify for a higher level of care and/or receiving students who are returning from emergency/crisis care without having sufficient sustainable out of school support in place to improve their emotional wellbeing.

During the 23-24 school year, focus was balancing the needs for enrolled students and supporting staff while also working to increase overall student enrollment to maintain fiscal responsibilities.

### ***Program Specific Progress Toward Achieving the Objectives and Purposes Set forth in the Collaborative Agreement and Strategic Plan***

The approval for the updated READS Collaborative Agreement by the Board, Members' School Committees and the DESE has resulted in the official addition of both Brockton Public Schools and Whitman-Hanson Regional School District effective July 1, 2024.

A brief overview of the actions taken in the past year to meet the 5 objectives of READS Collaborative as set forth in the Collaborative Agreement are:

- 1. To complement the educational programs and services of districts in a cost-effective manner;**
  - a.** Grants received: Capital Skills, Safe and Supportive Schools Grant, and the Mental Health Grant

- b. Two additional school districts, Brockton Public Schools and Whitman-Hanson Regional School District, obtained full membership
- 2. To improve the academic growth of students;**
  - a. Enrollment by May 2024 included 100 students at the Academy for grades PreK-12+ including the West Bridgewater campus. .
  - b. Enrollment for the DHH Program by May 2024 included 50 Students from 25+ neighboring member and non-member school districts.
  - c. Students' academic learning and social emotional progress has continued despite the challenges of covid-related illnesses, increased acuity of students enrolled, and other factors.
  - d. A .5 reading teacher was added to meet the instructional needs of our students at the Academy.
  - e. The Academy took on providing its own nutritious and balanced daily breakfast and lunch to all students. READS Collaborative became a member of the National School Lunch Program, allowing for reimbursable meals to our students.
  - f. **The Academy had 6 students graduate with a high school diploma for the Class of 2024!** The Academy at Bedford Street location had five graduates and the West Bridgewater location had one.
  - g. **The DHH Program had one student graduate from Bristol Plymouth Regional Technical School in June 2024 and one student from Norton move on to the Norton 18-22 transition program.**
- 3. To provide a range of diagnostic educational assessments for local districts;**
  - a. READS Clinic continues to offer valuable psychoeducational, neuropsychological, risk, and personality assessments. The Clinic has added the administration of the ADOS (Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule), a standardized assessment used to diagnose autism spectrum disorder (ASD).
  - b. READS District Services offers Assistive Technology, Augmentative and Alternative Communication, Speech and Language, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Adapted Physical Education, Central Auditory Processing, Functional Listening Evaluation, Educational Audiology, and Audiological Assessments, and other assessments as requested. Collectively, District Services staff completed over 220 evaluations for the 23-24 school year.
- 4. To offer quality professional development opportunities to general and special education teachers and related service providers;**
  - a. This year READS has offered or coordinated several professional development sessions:
    - i. Educator Evaluation for Administrators
    - ii. Collaborative Problem Solving through MGH Think:Kids made accessible through the Mental Health Grant was provided to READS staff **and** several staff members from 4 member districts for training and coaching.
- 5. To expand programs and services in a manner consistent with the needs of the Member Districts.**
  - a. The wraparound services known as Family Success Partnership have maintained the scope of support to families and school teams from the previous year. FSP clinicians continued to provide support to 75 families in 7 districts.
  - b. READS Academy continues its important work with Collaborative Problem Solving. READS has its own CPS certified Trainer as of June 2024. Plans are in place to add 4 more certified CPS trainers by June 2025. This is ensuring the plan for sustainability will be achieved by June 2025.
  - c. District Services added new contracts for the 2023-2024 school year for the following services and districts:
    - i. OT : Clarke School for the Deaf, East Bridgewater Public Schools
    - ii. PT : Braintree, New Heights Charter School

- iii. APE : Wareham, Silver Lake Regional
- ix. Speech : East Bridgewater Public Schools
- x. Psychoeducational Evaluations : Old Colony Regional Vocational High School
- xi. Home Care Related Services : Middleboro, Norton
- xii. Teacher of the Deaf Itinerant Services: Freetown-Lakeville, Monomy, North Attleboro, Norwood, Weymouth
- d. District Services also filled the short term coverage needs for the following services and districts in 2023-2024:
  - i. PT : Weymouth Public Schools (September 2023 - January 2024)
  - ii. OT : Whitney Academy (April 2024 - June 2024)
- e. In an effort to meet the growing needs of member and non-member districts, District Services hired an additional one full time Teacher of the Deaf, one part-time occupational therapist, one part-time speech and language pathologist assistant, two part-time occupational therapy assistants, and one part-time physical therapy assistant.
- f. DHH now has 15 ASL interpreters to address the growing need of individualized educational programming for its students, which includes maximum inclusive opportunities. This is an increase of 1.5 from the previous school year.

### *Progress Toward Achieving the Objectives in READS Strategic Plan*

The READS Collaborative Strategic Plan for 2021 -2024 sets forth the following priorities.

- o Plan for the safety and wellbeing of students and staff during and following the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- o Promote social justice and improvement in practices that impact equity, diversity and inclusion.
- o Enhance programs and services to better serve the students and families, our staff, and the member districts.
- o Maintain cost effective programs and services in a manner that supports the fiscal health of the collaborative in the aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

*Progress toward the objectives in the Strategic Plan are included within the description of each corresponding program heading below.*

### *READS Academy Program Overview*

READS Academy's location at 44 Bedford St. in Middleborough consists of one public day school building that houses two schools: Academy PreK-6 and Academy 7-12+.

READS Academy is a therapeutic public day school that establishes strong connections within the school community. The Academy serves children and adolescents between the ages of 3 to 22 who have been diagnosed with emotional, behavioral, neuro-developmental and learning disabilities, and require specialized instruction and services to meet their IEP goals. The mission of READS Academy is to facilitate a student's personal growth on an emotional and psychological level and to provide a structure for improving interpersonal and social skills through academics and counseling. The Academy is a highly structured program offering individualized and small-group academic instruction, individual and group counseling, and individualized emotional support and intervention. Therapeutic services such as individual and group counseling, speech/language therapy, occupational/physical therapy, specialized reading support, and adaptive physical education are also available. READS Academy promotes student learning success within the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and the MCAS. The school operates on

a 10-month calendar with an Extended School Year 5-week summer program.

The community at READS Academy cares for the students individually and collectively throughout the school year. This is especially evident during the holidays, which can be particularly difficult for students in the Academy. The Kindness Closet accepts donations and provides gift baskets, food items and gift cards to families in need. The Emporium is filled with donated items, including clothing, that students can select for themselves or wrap and gift to their family members.

Students' successes are measured and documented using READS Analytics. The READS Analytics tool gathers data for review by staff, students, and IEP teams in the following areas: Social Emotional Learning Skills, Employability Skills and Academic Skills. The analytics tool continues to provide data that is integral to instruction, assessment, intervention and team discussions around students' readiness to return to their home school district.

### ***READS Academy Assessment Services***

READS Academy offers short-term placement for Assessment Services at all grade levels, including the preschool classroom. The Assessment Services are designed to assist Special Education Teams in identifying the needs of students. The Assessment Services include comprehensive clinical and educational evaluations in a classroom environment that is supported by individualized counseling and therapeutic interventions. Evaluation Data is gathered through a variety of tools to assist the educational team in educational planning and placement at the conclusion of the assessment period. READS leadership model at READS Academy includes a full time Admissions Coordinator PreK-12+ whose sole responsibility is to process intakes / referrals from surrounding districts. This includes coordinating communication between READS, districts and families, providing program tours, and classroom visits.

### ***READS Alternative Learning Program Supports (ALPS)***

All READS students attend school in person with exceptions for those requiring short-term alternative programming due to safety and other circumstances requiring alternative learning program support (ALPS) interventions. ALPS works with a student's team to develop a highly specialized continuum of temporary or interim individual intervention for a child whose circumstances and level of need require such support.

In addition, students may require and be provided with short-term tutoring support per the recommendation of the student's educational team.

### ***Therapeutic Support and Services in All READS Academy Locations include:***

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- Individual and group counseling daily
- Student Success Plans, behavior support and intervention daily
- Social skills training daily
- Therapy dogs (2), an additional 2 therapy dogs will make scheduled visits for students
- Family engagement through daily/weekly contact with parents and guardians
- Academic Support provided across all locations to promote college and career readiness that includes:
  - Individualized and small group academic instruction
  - Technology Instruction PreK-12
  - MCAS preparation and support
  - Reading Intervention
  - Pre-vocational training

- o Fine Arts education opportunities
- o Employability Skills (9-12+)
- o Dual Enrollment opportunities at Massasoit Community College
- READS Analytics data collection and analysis that supports academic and therapeutic intervention planning and discussions at Team meetings
- Consultation to referring school districts

### ***READS Academy - PreK-6 School at Bedford St., Middleborough***

READS Academy Program Director Erinn Fautuex supervised programming that serves the students, families and districts in preschool to grade 6. She was supported by the Program Advancement Director Deirdre Dodd-Pizzuto until her retirement in June 2024. In addition, the PreK-6 School was also supported by Clinical Director Carrie Smith. The special educators, assistants and therapists have experience and specialized training in promoting self-regulation and social development for this age group.

Therapeutic supports include individual counseling, group counseling, and classroom community building activities. In addition, counselors are available for daily check-ins as needed.

READS incorporates hands-on, project-based learning to engage students at all levels. The Academy is a Project Lead the Way school and has a dedicated makerspace that provides additional opportunities for students to engage in STEAM activities.

READS Academy has a one-to-one for Chromebooks for student use and utilizes Google Apps for Education, Class Dojo and other applications to provide families with access to student learning.

The elementary students continue to learn science skills related to the health fields through implementation of augmented reality devices received through the MA Capital Skills Grant. High Impact Wonders ELA curriculum was purchased for grades K-6. Training for Wonders began in the Spring of 2024 with full implementation scheduled for September 2024. Students in grades PreK - 6 also participate in art and physical education classes.

### ***READS Academy - 7-12+ School at Bedford St., Middleborough***

READS Academy programming for grades 7-12+ was also led by Program Director Erinn Fautuex along with Program Advancement Director Deirdre Dowd-Pizzuto until her retirement in June 2024. Students in grades 7-12+ had their own Clinical Director Doreen Souza supporting staff and students. The READS Academy's specialized staff included 3 full time counselors as well as special educators and assistants with experience and specialized training in promoting self-regulation and social development. READS had 4 therapy dogs at the grades 7-12 school to assist students with emotional regulation and motivation to engage in school work or socialization.

Students at READS Academy acquire empathy and a sense of social justice through organized student council activities to raise funds for worthy causes. The students and staff have raised hundreds of dollars for organizations such as the Hoyt Foundation, Jimmy Fund, Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Fund and Hurricane Relief.

Community members donate new and gently used items to the school Emporium where students can use "READS bucks" earned for acts of kindness and behavior levels to purchase household items, clothes and gifts for themselves and family members. There has been a significant increase in the need to provide food and clothing directly to students and their families. In response, the Academy expanded the "Kindness Closet" to provide food staples that students can take home to share with their families.

READS Academy for grades 7-12+ has a one-to-one for Chromebooks for student use and utilizes Google

Apps for Education and other applications to provide families with access to student learning.

READS Academy 9-12+ offers pre-vocational tracks within the public day high school, such as:

- Industrial Technology:
  - 3-D and Laser Printing Lab
  - Assembling, repairing and maintaining materials constructed with hand tools
- Culinary/Food Service: Leading to Serve Safe Certification through the Middleborough Health Department
- Print Shop: Using state-of-the-art software and devices including a 3D printer to fulfill orders from READS and community entities.
- Health Services: Incorporating patient care through the use of simulation equipment including mannequins and adaptive equipment and new augmented reality learning stations.
- Capital Skills Grant - Welding: Virtual welding units, related welding equipment and materials and augmented reality learning stations were introduced in the fall of 2022 and continued in the 23-24 school year.

### ***Dual Enrollment***

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READS Academy offers opportunities for Dual Enrollment in partnership with Bristol Community College and Bay State College according to student interest.

### ***Work-Based Learning Program***

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READS Academy offers a Work-Based Learning Program for high school students who seek prevocational and vocational training in the form of on-site internships and off-site work study placements. This component of the program offers career readiness, transitional services, and opportunities for students to experience real-life working expectations to build employability skills and helps them to strengthen community connections.

WBL Programming includes Employability Skills Classes, vocational counseling, job shadowing and coaching, on-site internships, and off-site work-study placements as well as focused tutoring for successful performance on MCAS and acquisition of a high school diploma.

Students participated in onsite work-based learning opportunities during the 23-24 school year.

### ***Off-site Work Based Learning***

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Students are expected to interview for a placement, create a contract addressing specific goals and review how they correlate to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. These opportunities have been slow to return after the pandemic. READS Academy staff continue to work toward building students' employability skills to be able to meet the criteria for off-site work-based learning opportunities in the near future.

## ***READS Academy - 9-12 at West Bridgewater Middle Senior High School***

READS Academy also offers a substantially separate therapeutic classroom for students in grades 9-12 which is located in the West Bridgewater Middle/Senior High School. Students in this classroom have the opportunity for integration into a mainstream school setting, while continuing to receive specialized academic, behavioral, and emotional support. This placement option is available for students who may be ready to transition

from more restrictive educational placements, yet continue to require additional levels of therapeutic and academic support before returning to a full inclusion setting. The team of two teachers and one psychologist provide specialized support for students as they learn in the general education setting. Special Services (OT, PT, Speech/Language and Specialized Reading Instruction) are also provided in this setting. The students are fully embedded in the life of the West Bridgewater Public Schools including general education classes, school clubs and athletics. Program Advancement Director Deirdre Dowd-Pizzuto supervises programming that serves the students, families and districts of students in the 9-12 classroom.

### *READS Academy Program Advancement*

READS Academy is continuously advancing services that support students in the Academy and students in their home districts. Program Advancement Director Deirdre Dowd-Pizzuto is the contact person for these services for providing resources to meet the mental health needs of students. The following are some of the services that have been put in place and have continued over the past year to respond to the needs of students, families and districts.

- Placement of MSW Social Work Interns
- Introduction to Mental Health Programs/Resources/Training Opportunities
  - Collaborative Problem Solving - Think:kids Program from MGH with Dr. Stuart Ablon
  - Social Resilience Model - Professional Development Offering
  - Mental Health First Aid - Trainers available
- Development and Implementation of the READS Analytics Data Tools to:
  - inform IEP Teams in the development of goals and objectives
  - monitor student progress and guide implementation of interventions that support Academic, Behavioral, Social Emotional And Employability Skills
  - enhance Data Driven decision-making around readiness of students to transition to less restrictive educational settings
- Consultation to School Districts: In District Program Reviews, Coaching of Special Educators and implementation of trauma informed SEL and behavioral interventions/supports
- Exploration and review of curriculum to expand pre-vocational and vocational instruction
- Expansion of Early College Access/Dual Enrollment
- Expansion of on and off site Work Based Learning internship placements
- A partnership with Bristol Community College nursing program for students to complete observation hours with READS Academy school nurses was established in 23-24.

### *READS Academy's Progress toward Achieving the Objectives and Purposes Set forth in the Collaborative Agreement and Strategic Plan*

- **Priority 1** - Plan for the safety and wellbeing of students and staff during and following the COVID-19 Pandemic. READS Academy staff have continued to comply with all state and federal mandates regarding the pandemic. Academy staff, students, and families completed the surveys sent out by the Executive Director as part of her Entry Plan. Results showed increased focus needed on student and staff wellness. The Emergency Response Team continues to schedule 'table drills' to practice emergency evacuations in the event of an intruder. The leadership team continues to periodically review safety procedures.
- **Priority 2** - Promote social justice and improvement in practices that impact equity, diversity and inclusion. READS Academy has several staff members and all 3 Directors participating in the meetings of the Social

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. A stipend for leadership of this work was established for the Academy program. In addition, the Safe and Supportive Schools grant award provided funding for an equity audit to support a defined action plan for future years. This audit was completed by IDEAS starting in January 2023 with a concluding report in June 2023 containing recommendations. Consultation through Dr. Carlos Hoyt continued in 23-24.

- **Priority 3** - Enhance programs and services to better serve the students and families, our staff, and the member districts. See all the above.
- **Priority 4** - Maintain cost effective programs and services in a manner that supports the fiscal health of the collaborative in the aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic. READS Academy enrollment trends improved in 23-24 since the impact of Covid-19. Due to the increasing in-district specialized programming, READS is seeing increased referrals for students with more complex social-emotional profiles. The enrollment reached 100 students for the Academy as a whole by May 2024.

### *Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Program, PreK -12+, EI and Consultation*

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing (hereinafter DHH) program is recognized throughout the state for its highly specialized instructional program that provides a broad spectrum of services. The READS Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program recognizes and facilitates all modes of communication as appropriate for each child. The Program Director, Evelyn Rankin, sits on boards for the region and state including an advisory board for the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. READS DHH educators, therapists and interpreters contribute to the improvement of programming for children with hearing loss on the state, regional and national levels. Established by the Board of Directors as an essential service in 1979, over the past 44 years the program has educated hundreds of children with hearing loss. The program currently **(FY24) serves 50** students in grades PreK-12+ and 10+ children (birth to 3) in specialized Early Intervention.

The DHH program offers flexible and wide-ranging programming options within public school settings. There are eight classrooms for children in Preschool through grade 12 located within the Norton Public Schools. There is a second high school classroom option at Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical High School. The READS DHH program has the only program for Deaf students that is fully matriculated into a vocational high school. It has been stated that “the READS Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program is unmatched in the state.”

Program options range from self-contained classrooms with a Teacher of the Deaf providing maximum support in a small group, to full inclusion in general education settings with appropriate supports tailored to individual students. Instruction is accessible to students through the direct use of American Sign Language, interpreted ASL, use of spoken English, and a variety of specialized instructional techniques that enhance language and literacy for d/Deaf students.

The DHH preschool is a full-day program offering intensive language intervention (ASL and spoken language/listening, as appropriate), sensory-motor integration, Early Childhood Learning Standards and social-emotional skills. Students engage in play-based learning with an early literacy focus incorporating themes based on children’s literature.

Beginning in kindergarten and continuing through elementary grades, students receive academic and language instruction within self-contained classes with a Teacher of the Deaf while they also have opportunities to be included in general education classrooms. Students at this level join hearing peers for Specials classes (Art, PE, Computers, and Music (when accessible), and are increasingly accessing content in the general education classroom with interpreters or other accommodations and supports through the DHH program. Intensive literacy intervention and support is provided throughout the elementary years from two specialized Teachers of the Deaf.

Middle school students are fully included in general education Science classes with interpreters and modifications as needed. Additionally, they join STEM, Tech Ed, PE, Art and Music. Students are included in Math, Social Studies and English classes according to IEP Team recommendations and with appropriate support

and services needed to succeed. At the middle school level, students often begin participating in extra-curricular activities with their hearing peers as well. Social emotional learning at this age is fully supported through both the general curriculum and with the assistance of a School Adjustment Counselor. The middle school level also includes programming for students with multiple diagnoses in addition to hearing loss or deafness. This classroom was developed in response to requests from two districts.

Students at both Norton High School and Bristol-Plymouth Vocational Technical High School are surrounded with supports that assist them in meeting the competency requirements for a high school diploma or certification of completion. They are able to participate in all school activities including extracurriculars according to their interests. Students in the DHH program who do not have an additional diagnosis to hearing loss will typically graduate from high school within 4 years. Some students attend high school for an additional year or two depending on their IEP transition goals. Students with an additional diagnosis are able to continue with a transition plan that includes placement in the program until the age of 22 as appropriate. Transition planning for these students includes participation in in-school pre-vocational internships & off-site internships as students are ready to do so.

The DHH program provides each child with access to a specialized teacher as well as teaching assistant in the classroom. Currently, Deaf adults, both teachers and assistants, provide in-depth modeling of American Sign Language in our classrooms. Children have strong spoken language models provided by hearing adults who are also skilled in ASL.

The DHH program provides each child with the skills to effectively use an interpreter in a variety of settings as they become more academically independent. Students in the DHH program learn valuable skills for using an interpreter to access learning, social interaction, extra-curricular activities and formal events. The development of these skills begins in the early grades within the DHH classroom and expands to core academic classes as well as job sites and community events as students prepare for graduation from high school. READS interpreters are certified as achieving a qualifying score on the Educational Interpreter Proficiency Achievement (EIPA) in accordance with regulations and are registered with the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH).

The DHH program provides each child with speech and language intervention that is specialized to their level of language acquisition, communication mode and type of amplification. The Speech and Language Pathologists and Assistants are fluent in ASL and have specialized skills in working with DHH students. The DHH program provides each child intensive literacy intervention in the early grades and continued support through high school. The Literacy Specialists have specialized training in providing literacy intervention to children with hearing loss and incorporate tools and assessments designed for children who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing.

The DHH program provides children with specialized counseling services through a structured social emotional learning program designed for children with hearing loss in the early grades and ongoing group or individual counseling support as needed at the secondary level.

Students in Norton High School and Bristol-Plymouth programs who have success in graduating in 4 years are entering college or transitioning into a vocation. Students in the lower grades are more successfully reaching grade level academics and transitioning to more general education classes than 10 years ago. The DHH program is improving literacy rates as measured by the Leveled Literacy Intervention Program. The students in the DHH program have qualified for the past several years to send a high school team to the annual Gallaudet Academic Bowl. This trip is possible through the generous support of donations from area businesses, Deaf Community Event funds and funds from the Hearing Loss Association of America. Although unable to qualify for the Academic Bowl in 2024, efforts are being made to recruit and strengthen a Team for FY25.

In partnership with Norton Public Schools, students in DHH have access to one-to-one Chromebooks, Google for Education and other technology. READS has provided each classroom with a state of the art Promethean TouchScreen to replace outdated SmartBoards.

Again this year, READS DHH preschool has made available the opportunity for serving as a paid co-op placement for any interested student from Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical High School as part of their Early Education and Care learning experience. This partnership provides the student with an opportunity for work experience and has provided the program with much needed support staff during a staffing shortage.

DHH students participated in the 8th grade trip to New York City with their peers. Students have participated in Norton Sports such as the soccer and basketball teams. One student is on the cheerleading team. Students attended the Woosox game in Rhode Island for Deaf Awareness Night. DHH students also participated in Norton High School's Unified Sports.

### ***DHH Services Provided in All Locations***

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- Therapeutic support that includes:
  - ◇ Spoken language skill development
  - ◇ American Sign Language instruction
  - ◇ Speech/Language therapy
  - ◇ Specialized aural habilitation for children with Cochlear Implants and the full range of audition
  - ◇ Explicit literacy instruction
  - ◇ Small group and individual counseling
  - ◇ Educational Audiology consultation
- Academic Support to promote college and career readiness that includes:
  - ◇ Small group & individual instruction
  - ◇ General education classroom participation with supports
  - ◇ Educational Interpreters
  - ◇ School-to-work programming at the high school level
  - ◇ Opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities

#### ***Additional services may include:***

- ◇ Extra-curricular support
- ◇ Intensive intervention
- ◇ One to one assistant (job coach, nurse, note taker)
- ◇ Occupational/physical/adaptive physical education as needed
- ◇ Vision consultation as needed
- ◇ Extended School Year
- ◇ Functional Listening Evaluations

### ***DHH Early Intervention Specialty Service Provider***

READS DHH Educators also serve as Specialty Service Providers through the Department of Public Health to meet the needs of families with children identified with reduced hearing or deafness from birth to age 3. These Early Intervention services focus on building the infant or toddler's communication skills while supporting parents and connecting them to resources and other families with similar experiences.

READS provides specialized instruction and support to children and families through contracts with several Early Intervention Offices. These services are provided per-diem and offer families in-home therapeutic intervention in areas that include: care of cochlear implants; American Sign Language instruction; behavioral intervention; language development; communication development (alternative and augmentative communication if needed); auditory attention skills; fine motor development for sign language proficiency and early literacy.

The number of children receiving specialized services from DHH staff through Early Intervention varies each year. There are currently 10+ children receiving in-home services and support to families. READS provides specialized Early Intervention in partnership with EI Centers in Brockton, Taunton, Fall River and others.

### *Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program's Progress toward Achieving the Objectives and Purposes Set forth in the Collaborative Agreement and Strategic Plan*

- **Priority 1** - Plan for the safety and wellbeing of students and staff during and following the COVID-19 Pandemic. READS DHH staff have continued to comply with all state and federal mandates regarding the pandemic in collaboration with host school districts, Norton Public Schools and Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical School.
- **Priority 2** - Promote social justice and improvement in practices that impact equity, diversity and inclusion. DHH has several staff members and both Directors participating in the meetings of the Social Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Dr. Carlos Hoyt met on a couple of occasions with the DHH Program Director and one of the Teachers of the Deaf (TOD) to review the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion needs for DHH students and staff in order to establish priority areas of focus.
- **Priority 3** - Enhance programs and services to better serve the students and families, our staff, and the member districts. See all of the above.
- **Priority 4** - Maintain cost effective programs and services in a manner that supports the fiscal health of the collaborative in the aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The READS DHH program continues to have a stable enrollment of students and several new referrals each year. Increased inclusive opportunities are available to students with support from ASL interpreters. In response to the demand for consultation services, the additional need for increased staff to provide services for students in districts is continually being assessed and provided.

### *District Services*

The District Services Program is a highly individualized program encompassing a wide variety of services, including consultation, evaluation, and direct services in response to the needs of students and districts in the following areas:

- ◇ Academic Tutoring in the Home
- ◇ Adaptive Physical Education
- ◇ Applied Behavioral Analysis, training and support
- ◇ Assistive Technology Assessments and Consultation
- ◇ Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Assessments and Consultation
- ◇ Central Auditory Processing Evaluations
- ◇ Educational Audiology assessment and consultation
- ◇ Family Success Partnership Counselor (wraparound services)
- ◇ Functional Behavioral Assessments, consultation and training
- ◇ Home-Care Services
- ◇ Occupational Therapy
- ◇ Orientation and Mobility Consultation
- ◇ Physical Therapy
- ◇ Professional Development
- ◇ Program Reviews
- ◇ Sensory Integration, evaluation/consultation

- ◇ Speech/Language Evaluation and Intervention
- ◇ Specialized Staffing, including counselors
- ◇ Summer services
- ◇ Teacher of the Deaf Itinerant assessment, consultation, and direct services

District Services is constantly evolving and expanding services to meet the needs of students and the requests of districts. Director Dr. Bethany Estrella supervises service delivery for the students, families and districts. This year, District Services added Teacher of the Deaf Itinerant services and Educational Audiology services under its purview. Services expanded within this calendar year include the Assistive Technology and Augmentative and Alternative Communication Evaluations, Teacher of the Deaf Itinerant services, home care services, speech and language therapy, adaptive physical education, and physical therapy services. The Family Success Partnership (FSP) program remained stable in supporting 7 districts and 75 families. The READS FSP counselors meet with families to set goals that improve outcomes for the family and result in improved learning for the students. Referrals are made by school teams and participation in the services is voluntary. Since February 2016 when READS launched this service with one part-time counselor, the FSP counselors have assisted well over 200 families to meet their goals by supporting them outside of the school day and at locations that are convenient to the families' schedules. FSP counselors have continued providing individual counseling services as a bridge to more comprehensive services, connected families to community resources, stabilized food and housing instability and strengthened connections between families and schools. Anecdotal information identified incidences of family intervention that avoid potential out of district placements. This service is a factor in significant cost avoidance for districts. Qualitative data is gathered continually to evaluate the impact of this program, which identifies the themes in family goals, the additional resources added for families, and the satisfaction rates of families and districts.

Program Reviews are conducted for Member Districts at reduced cost. Past reviews have been conducted for Speech and Language services, Alternative Program models and Substantially Separate Program models.

District Services continues to coordinate and provide Assistive Technology and AAC services. The Assistive Technology/AAC Team is composed of a Speech Pathologist and Occupational Therapist with specialized expertise. This team can identify low, mid, and high-tech assistive/AAC tools that can support students with learning and communication. The AT/AAC team's expanded services include a software/equipment loan program and a model for sustained support for implementation after the initial assessment and recommendations are made.

District Services excels at providing services to member and non-member districts at reasonable cost that include: FMLA and Maternity coverage, as well as ongoing services of OT, PT, Speech Therapy, tutoring, ABA, AT, and APE. (Please see noted coverages on page 9.) There were 30 AT/AAC evaluations completed during the 23-24 school year. District Services completed 146 evaluations (OT, PT, APE, and SLP [including 10 Independent Educational Evaluations) and during the 2023-2024 school year to support 42 member and non-member districts, which is significantly greater than years past. In total, District Services conducted over 220 evaluations for the 2023-2024 school year.

All District Services referrals are carefully evaluated; goals and objectives are formulated; and a service/consultation delivery system is established by the service provider in coordination with the school/district.

### *Consultation Services from a Teacher of the Deaf (TOD)*

The READS Consulting Team has continued to expand this year due to increased demand. The Consultation services are provided by licensed Teachers of Deaf who currently provide consultation that serves over 120 students in their home schools/districts, across 42 school districts, with 21 evaluations conducted. The consultation model in districts ranges from consulting with a teacher on just a few students on occasion to regular consultation and direct service for multiple days each week for dozens of students.

The Teacher of the Deaf also provides Functional Listening Evaluations for students in districts and assists with initial evaluation for incoming students. Due to increased demand, READS currently has 3 full time and 2 part-time Consulting Teachers of the Deaf.

### *Educational Audiology Consult*

READS Audiologist, Dr. Kristy Lamoureux, provides a variety of consultation services to address the environmental concerns and needs of students in district classrooms as well as within READS DHH classrooms. The requests for educational audiology services continue to expand each year going from 65 in FY22 to 119 for FY23 and 176 in FY24, reflecting a trend of 5 straight years of increased contracts. There were 10 Central Auditory Processing evaluations and 13 Audiological evaluations. These services are billed through District Services.

### *District Service's Progress toward Achieving the Objectives and Purposes Set forth in the Collaborative Agreement and Strategic Plan*

- **Priority 1** - Plan for the safety and wellbeing of students and staff during and following the COVID-19 Pandemic. District Services staff comply with all safety directives from both READS Collaborative and the host schools in which they work.
- **Priority 2** - Promote social justice and improvement in practices that impact equity, diversity and inclusion. The Director of District Services is a participant in the meetings of the Social Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.
- **Priority 3** - Enhance programs and services to better serve the students and families, our staff, and the member districts. See all of the above.
- **Priority 4** - Maintain cost effective programs and services in a manner that supports the fiscal health of the collaborative in the aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic. District Services continues to offer services to students and families in their schools/homes and has seen an increase in contracts for services and a significant increase in requests for Family Success Partnership services and mental health providers.

### *READS Diagnostic Clinic and Ancillary Services Progress toward Achieving the Objectives and Purposes Set forth in the Collaborative Agreement and Strategic Plan*

#### *Clinic*

Regional Educational Assessment and Diagnostic Services (READS) was formed in 1974 when superintendents realized that there was a need for close-to-home, cost-efficient diagnostic services for students with disabilities whose needs were not being met in classrooms in their schools. The Clinic was formed to provide assessment services to children between the ages of 3 and 22 years. The Clinic currently provides psycho-educational evaluations, neuropsychological-educational evaluations, risk assessments, personality assessments, and a variety of additional specialized assessments, including specialized evaluations of children with hearing loss. After all aspects of the evaluation have been completed, a post-evaluation conference is scheduled. Families and school personnel are an integral part of this conference and are invited to participate by providing information to supplement the findings of the evaluation team. A comprehensive report is provided with each evaluation.

Referrals to the various programs are accepted at any time during the year and are sent by the Special

Education Teams through the Special Education Administrator of the district in which the child resides. Requests are reviewed by the Clinic Manager and Lead Psychologist. Specialized evaluations of children with hearing loss are offered in coordination with the Director of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program.

The Clinic provided 210 pre-committed evaluations to Member Districts last year. In total the clinical psychologists conducted 284 evaluations for students from Member and non-member districts during the 23-24 school year, up from 270 for FY23. The Clinic provides flexible assessment schedules to accommodate families on an individual basis. The Clinic has found that participation in conferences with districts and families following an evaluation has increased through the use of Zoom due to the reduced impact of driving distances and time constraints. This option for attending a conference will continue to be offered by the clinic.

Districts are permitted to use up to 25% of their pre-committed evaluation slots for Risk Assessments (not to exceed 5). This expansion of Member's use of clinic slots reflects READS Collaborative's responsiveness to an increased need of the districts as indicated by the Special Education Administrators group and was adopted as general operational practice since the 2019-2020 school year.

### ***Professional Development***

READS continues to offer PD that is targeted to meet the requests of the districts. READS offered Educator Evaluation for New Administrators on 2 different occasions during the winter and summer of the 2023 - 2024 school year as a hybrid model via ZOOM to support both Member and Non-Member Districts. These sessions provided districts with an opportunity to send educators to professional development sessions at a lower cost than individual districts could have procured.

In addition, Dr. Estrella provided professional development and/or training. She presented "Partnering for Family Success" at the MASC/MASS 2023 Conference. Mr. Benjamin Coleman, special education teacher, and Mrs. Deirdre Dowd Pizzuto, Program Advancement Director, presented during the MassCUE Fall Conference on READS Analytics as a successful and comprehensive data collecting tool for student progress.

### ***MOEC (Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives)***

READS is an active member of MOEC. MOEC represents the 24 Collaboratives spread throughout the state of Massachusetts. Collectively, the 24 Collaboratives provide programming and services to over 300 member and nonmember public school districts. MOEC provides a wide variety of valuable resources to the state's Collaboratives. This includes, but is not limited to, professional development, sharing of resources, policy development and research, information exchange and networking, and field support and technical assistance.

## ***Cost Effectiveness of READS Collaborative Programs***

### ***READS COLLABORATIVE BUDGET SUMMARY - FY24***

| <b><i>PROGRAM</i></b> | <b><i>FY24<br/>APPROVED BUDGET</i></b> |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Administration        | \$1,509,601                            |
| Clinic                | \$318,909                              |
| Clinic Ancillary      | \$136,275                              |

|                                  |                            |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Program | \$3,426,353                |
| Academy Program                  | \$6,539,394                |
| District Services & Ancillary    | \$1,690,356                |
| Teacher of the Deaf              | \$369,450                  |
| DHH Summer                       | \$82,867                   |
| Academy Summer                   | \$212,225                  |
| District Services Summer         | \$39,461                   |
| Early Intervention               | \$13,685                   |
| Professional Development         | \$3,450                    |
| <b><i>TOTAL FY24 BUDGET</i></b>  | <b><i>\$14,342,026</i></b> |

The collaborative structure is designed to leverage cost savings on behalf of districts in the provision of programs and services to children with disabilities as well as other collaborations for services. The collaborative's process for the development of the budget provides for a thorough review of revenues and expenses in relation to tuition rates and fees for services. Budget subcommittees of the Special Education Administrators Advisory Group meet for an in-depth review of the following budgets: READS Academy, Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, District Services and the Clinic. The Personnel Subcommittee and Finance Subcommittee of the Board of Directors and the President of the Board meet jointly to do a further analysis of the proposed budget. The Special Education Administrators Advisory Group meets as a whole to endorse the budget after another review of revenues, expenses, tuition rates and projected service fees. The Board of Directors then meets to review the budget and discuss any additional adjustments prior to a subsequent meeting to vote approval of the budget.

This process provides for multiple avenues for input from the advisory group and the Board. Tuition increases are carefully considered and questioned before endorsement. READS has engaged in a lease of a newly renovated facility to further enhance programming for students and moved the Academy program PreK-12+ into the space as of September 2021. READS Academy tuition saw an increase over the previous 3 years in order to build toward funding for the new location, but continues to be a cost-effective option for districts in the region. The projected impact on tuition was shared with the Board throughout the process.

READS Collaborative sold the previous Academy property located at East Grove Street, Middleborough during the 2022-2023 school year. The proceeds of the sale were added to the general fund. READS leases 8 classroom spaces from Norton Public Schools, 1 space at Bristol-Plymouth RVTHS and 1 from West Bridgewater Public Schools at reasonable rates.

READS Collaborative's educational programs provide interventions that promote a student's return to their home district to continue learning as appropriate. Students also receive support that has proven successful in helping them meet competency determinations for a high school diploma, most often within 4 years. Both of these programmatic goals result in reduced expenses for school districts as students spend fewer years in READS Collaborative, if appropriate, than they might spend in a private placement.

## *No Membership Fee*

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READS Collaborative is unique in its membership structure. There is no membership fee. Each of the 20 Member Districts are required to purchase 4 evaluations per year through the READS Clinic. The districts have a choice of using these 'slots' for a psycho-educational evaluation, neuro-psychological evaluation or a risk assessment. This fee for service is the only requirement of membership in the collaborative other than participation in governance, program development and student enrollment. Essentially Member Districts have immediate return for their investment in the collaborative in the form of service.

## *Competitive Tuition Rates*

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The costs of services and programs provided by READS Collaborative are highly competitive and result in cost savings to the Member and Non-Member Districts when compared to other out of district placements. The services would not be available in the area if the Collaborative did not coordinate them on behalf of the Board of Directors and in collaboration with the Special Education Administrators Advisory Group. A comparison of tuition rates with private schools and other collaboratives does not yield an accurate or informative description of the multi-faceted cost effectiveness of READS programs and services, but is provided in the appendices.

READS is a cost-effective solution in the region for both children with social-emotional challenges and children with reduced hearing or deafness. Appendix B shows a comparison of tuition ranked by daily rates for similar programs which students from the region may attend. The READS Academy Program offers a comprehensive therapeutic approved public day program at a tuition rate that is comparable to programs in both private schools and public collaboratives. The FY24 tuition for Member districts is \$61,200.00. READS' tuition rates and fees for service are reviewed carefully by the Special Education Directors and the Superintendents who form the Board of Directors and determined to be cost-effective alternatives to private school placements or other agencies given the scope of services provided.

READS delineates tuition levels for the DHH program in order to provide more cost effective alternatives that reflect the level of student need. The READS DHH program tuition for levels 1 and 2 is lower than comparable private school programs and is the only program in the region to offer mainstream opportunities in core content as well as electives and specials. The READS Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program is the only collaborative program in the state to provide PreK-12+ education in a public school setting. The Member rates for the Level 1 Tuition for FY 24 for the majority of students placed in the DHH program is \$69,480.00. Additional costs for participation in Bristol-Plymouth Vocational Technical High School, non-member costs, support for participation in extracurricular activities, specialized interventions and summer programs are not included in these rates.

Due to the evolving nature of the communication and learning needs of students in the DHH program a revised 2 tiered tuition structure, which was developed in cooperation with the Special Education Administrators Advisory Group, was implemented in FY21 and continues to be in place.

The assessment of cost-effectiveness for programs includes several factors that cannot be measured in tuition alone such as:

- proximity to the child's home district and reduced transportation costs for sending districts in most cases;
- reduced tuition costs for Members;
- higher rate of student return to districts for students in the READS Academy Program after improved self-regulation, resulting in multiple years of savings on tuition;
- increased likelihood of meeting competency determinations for graduation after 4 years of high school for most students (as determined by the Team) rather than the cost of educating them until they are 22 in both the Academy and DHH resulting in multiple years of savings on tuition;

- comprehensive support for families that reduces district day-to-day personnel resources to resolve issues and meet the child's needs thereby reducing the strain on resources of counselors, administrators and educators in the district; and
- provision of specialized services and equipment related to hearing loss in a coordinated manner, rather than reacting to specialized individual needs as they arise, thereby reducing the costly implications of compensatory services, litigation or hearings.

In relation to fees for service, the Collaborative absorbs the liability of health insurance costs and unemployment benefits for specialized service personnel and support personnel. The Clinic, District Services and Ancillary Services (including professional development) are designed to merely recoup the cost of providing the service and compensate the collaborative for administrative costs.

The surplus funds from these services are typically returned to the Member Districts in the form of Clinic Credits and Tuition Credits in the subsequent year thereby providing an additional financial benefit and further reducing the cost of participation in programs and services.

### ***Tuition Credits and Clinic Credits to Districts at the Close of FY24***

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The READS Collaborative was unable to provide any tuition or clinic credits to districts at the close of FY24.

READS has provided cost-effective solutions to Member Districts since 1974 and will continue to provide those solutions into the future in alignment with the mission statement **to provide creative, flexible solutions that promote the success and well-being of each child, adolescent and adult learner.**



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## Appendix A

# Strategic Planning Action Steps 2021-2024

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- **Priority 1** Plan for the safety and wellbeing of students and staff during and following the COVID-19 Pandemic
  - Develop and Staff Elements of 3 Tiers of Support for Mental Health as identified for priority implementation by Special Education Administrators.
  - Enhance mitigation and prevention strategies to reduce the spread of illnesses such as COVID-19.
  - Form a Wellness Committee to develop action steps to address the ongoing physical and mental wellbeing of students and staff.
- **Priority 2** Promote social justice and improvement in practices that impact equity, diversity and inclusion.
  - Invite staff from across the collaborative to engage in initial conversations.
  - Form a Committee and develop a 3 year plan.
  - Embed [Antiracist Leadership Competencies](#) in Program Director and Leadership Team Agendas and Professional Development.
- **Priority 3** Enhance programs and services to better serve the students and their families, our staff, and the member districts.
  - Build on the skills learned during remote learning to provide flexible growth opportunities for students and staff, and engagement opportunities for families.
  - Develop a process for improvement that encompasses a balanced, 3-pronged approach to: Academics, College and Career Readiness and Personal Social Development.
  - Expand programs that prepare students to transition to a fulfilling adult life through opportunities for internships, certification leading to employment, college readiness and dual enrollment, building financial literacy, preparing for adult responsibilities, and building healthy relationships.
  - Review program staffing models to provide increased opportunity for advancement and leadership.
- **Priority 4** Maintain cost effective programs and services in a manner that supports the fiscal health of the collaborative in the aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic.
  - Create supports throughout programs that result in improved focus on referrals and enrollment.
  - Engage in purposeful marketing of the Collaborative programs and services to attract more referrals to programs and more contracts for services.
  - Review the effectiveness of technology solutions to support students, staff and families in engagement, access, academics, college and career readiness, and personal social development.
  - Review Academy budget to align revenues and expenses related to staffing and the new building.
  - Develop a plan to allocate funds to the capital fund to prepare for an option to own 44 Bedford St. in the future.

## Appendix B

### Deaf and Hard of Hearing Tuition Comparison FY24

Tuition Comparisons for placements that DHH students have transferred from, or to, over the past decade. For reference only:

| Deaf and Hard of Hearing Programs FY24                                             |                          |                                     |                   |                     |                 |  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--|
| Agency Name                                                                        | Program Type             | Name                                | Days of Operation | Annual Price        | Daily Price     |  |
| Perkins School for the Blind                                                       | Intensive Day            | Deaf/Blind/<br>Multi-Impaired       | 205               | \$244,292.63        | \$1,191.67      |  |
| Learning Ctr. for the Deaf                                                         | Day                      | Walden                              | 216               | \$179,178.28        | \$829.53        |  |
| Perkins School for the Blind                                                       | Intermediate Day         | Intermediate Day                    | 205               | \$211,799.00        | \$1,033.17      |  |
| Perkins School for the Blind                                                       | Day                      | Day                                 | 205               | \$163,392.29        | \$797.04        |  |
| Beverly School for the Deaf                                                        | Day                      | Child. Comm. Ctr.                   | 204               | \$119,047.72        | \$583.57        |  |
| <b>READS DHH - Level 2<br/>Intensive</b><br><i>3 Non-Member Students projected</i> | <i>Day -<br/>Level 2</i> | <i>Deaf and Hard of<br/>Hearing</i> | <i>180</i>        | <i>\$102,240.00</i> | <i>\$568.00</i> |  |
| Learning Ctr. for the Deaf                                                         | Intensive Day            | Day                                 | 198               | \$107,097.78        | \$540.90        |  |
| Cardinal Cushing School & Training Ctr.                                            | Day                      | Day/Vocational                      | 216               | \$116,184.86        | \$537.89        |  |
| Walker, Inc.                                                                       | Day                      | Walker School                       | 216               | \$112,562.96        | \$521.12        |  |
| Cardinal Cushing School & Training Ctr.                                            | Day                      | Day                                 | 216               | \$108,737.88        | \$503.42        |  |
| Learning Ctr. for the Deaf                                                         | Day                      | Day                                 | 198               | \$96,645.29         | \$488.11        |  |
| Beverly School for the Deaf                                                        | Day                      | BSD                                 | 204               | \$97,320.89         | \$477.06        |  |
| Willie Ross School for the Deaf                                                    | Day                      | Day                                 | 180               | \$79,444.99         | \$441.36        |  |
| <b>READS DHH - Level 1<br/>18 Member, 29<br/>Non-Member Students<br/>projected</b> | <b>Day -<br/>Level 1</b> | <b>Deaf and Hard of<br/>Hearing</b> | <b>180</b>        | <b>\$79,920</b>     | <b>\$444</b>    |  |
| Clarke School for the Deaf                                                         | Day                      | Day Education                       | 180               | \$73,661.89         | \$409.23        |  |

## Appendix C

### READS Academy Therapeutic Day Program Tuition Comparison FY24

| Therapeutic Day Programs FY24           |              |                      |                   |                 |              |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Agency Name                             | Program Type | Name                 | Days of Operation | Annual Price    | Daily Price  |
| McLean Hospital, Inc.                   | Day          | CNS                  | 216               | \$114,004.17    | \$527.80     |
| F. L. Chamberlain School, Inc.          | Day          | Day                  | 216               | \$125,060.10    | \$578.98     |
| Cardinal Cushing School & Training Ctr. | Day          | Day/Vocational       | 216               | \$116,184.86    | \$537.89     |
| Home for Little Wanderers               | Day          | Southeast Campus Day | 216               | \$115,405.90    | \$534.29     |
| Walker, Inc.                            | Day          | Walker School        | 216               | \$112,562.96    | \$521.12     |
| Italian Home for Children, Inc.         | Day          | Italian Home Day     | 220               | \$104,743.53    | \$476.11     |
| Stevens Children's Home                 | Day          | Stevens Home         | 224               | \$97,715.72     | \$436.23     |
| Justice Resource Institute              | Day          | Granite Day          | 202               | \$81,493.58     | \$403.43     |
| New England Academy                     | Day          | NE Academy           | 198               | \$79,811.79     | \$403.09     |
| Pilgrim Area Collaborative              | Day          | All Programs         | 180               | \$63,420        | \$352.33     |
| <b>READS Collaborative Member</b>       | <b>Day</b>   | <b>READS Academy</b> | <b>180</b>        | <b>\$70,380</b> | <b>\$391</b> |
| Walker, Inc.                            | Day          | Beacon High School   | 198               | \$72,604.88     | \$366.69     |
| Justice Resource Institute              | Day          | Anchor Academy       | 198               | \$68,257.93     | \$344.74     |
| North River Collaborative               | Day          | North River School   | 180               | \$53,477        | \$297.09     |