

**MANCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT SAU #37
COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING**

August 25, 2026

5:30 p.m.

1. Chair Parr called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.
2. The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Committee Members Parr, Stewart and Smith.

Absent: Committee Members Turner and Georges.

3. Public Forum

There was no one present wishing to give comment during public forum.

6. Approval of Minutes from the June 15, 2026, Teaching and Learning Committee Meeting

*On motion of **Committee Member Stewart**, duly seconded by **Committee Member Smith**, it was moved to approve the minutes of the June 15, 2026 Teaching and Learning meeting. Committee Members Turner and Georges were absent. All present were in favor and the motion passed.*

7. Presentations

- a. Summer Program Highlights 2026 – by Leslie Whitney, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning, Wendy Nassar Perron, Executive Director of Multilingual Learner Education, Alex Levesque, Director of 21st Century Program

Leslie Whitney, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning; Wendy Perron, Executive Director of Multilingual Learner Education; Alex Levesque, Director of 21st Century Programs; and other district staff presented an overview of the District's 2026 summer programming. Ms. Whitney explained that the District provided free academic recovery, enrichment, and transition services to support students and families. Much of the programming was supported through Title IV funding and focused on reducing summer learning loss, strengthening social-emotional skills, and preparing students for the upcoming school year. At this time, they highlighted the summer learning programs.

21st Century Summer Program

Mr. Levesque reported that the 21st Century program provided a summer experience similar to a traditional school day, including academic reinforcement, lunch and recess, and enrichment activities comparable to unified arts programming. Nearly 630 students participated for at least one day, with many attending for significantly longer periods. Elementary programming included play-based learning centers, small-group reading and writing practice, arts and crafts, STEM projects, physical activity, and recreational opportunities. The middle school program at Memorial incorporated project-based learning and career exploration while embedding math and literacy skills. Mr. Levesque thanked the staff, community partners, and team members who contributed to the program.

Blast Off to Kindergarten

Ms. Whitney reviewed the District's Blast Off to Kindergarten program, which was designed to provide incoming kindergarten students with social-emotional experiences and light academic preparation while helping students and families become comfortable with entering school. Programming was offered at Bakersville, Beech, McDonough, and Northwest and consisted of two two-week sessions. More than 100 students were served, attendance was approximately 91%, and class sizes were kept small.

Newcomer and Dual Language Summer Programming

Ms. Perron discussed the summer newcomer program, which was offered in partnership with 21st Century. Students in the newcomer phase received targeted English-language development instruction during the academic portions of the program. The program was funded through Title III. The District served 53 elementary newcomer students and 33 middle school students.

Ms. Perron explained that high school participation remained challenging because summer programming competes with paid employment, internships, and programs that provide academic credit. The District has been discussing potential changes to the high school model, including a possible partnership with Saint Anselm College that could provide additional incentives for students.

Students participating in the newcomer program demonstrated an average 20-point increase on the UFLI literacy assessment. The high school curriculum was also revised to provide targeted algebra instruction and additional writing and speaking opportunities. Community members visited weekly to discuss college and career pathways.

The District also launched its first summer dual language immersion program for rising first- and second-grade students from the Bakersville program. Fourteen students participated. Students joined 21st Century enrichment activities while continuing academic instruction in Spanish to strengthen bilingual and biliteracy skills.

Credit Recovery and Extended School Year

Ms. Whitney reported that more than 230 students participated in high school credit recovery. A total of 178 students earned 203.5 credits, and approximately 73 students advanced a grade level. Credit recovery was available at all four high schools and provides students with an opportunity to regain previously lost credits and remain on track for graduation. The District also provided Extended School Year services to eligible students through their Individualized Education Programs. Services were designed to prevent regression and support continued progress toward individualized goals. The District increased collaboration between ESY and 21st Century programming this summer.

Freshman Academy

Joyce Lewis reported that Freshman Academy was offered at all four high schools for the first time and was funded through Title IV. Eighty-eight students participated. Students were introduced to their high schools, staff, and peers while participating in academic and transition activities. Students particularly enjoyed touring the Manchester School of Technology and seeing the full range of programs offered. Through the District's partnership with Saint Anselm College, students learned about Access Academy, participated in a hands-on GPA activity, and learned about the college search process.

Freshman Academy included three primary components:

- A STEM-focused academic block;
- A durable-skills unit supported by the Mental Health Center of Greater Manchester addressing procrastination, peer conflict, coping skills, and anxiety; and
- A "High School 101" unit led by Project AWARE Student Success Managers covering credits, GPA, graduation requirements, schedules, and other aspects of transitioning to high school.

Students who successfully completed Google Classroom assignments were eligible to earn elective credit through an Extended Learning Opportunity.

Ms. Lewis emphasized that one of the program's greatest benefits was allowing students to establish relationships with staff and peers and become familiar with their school campus before the first day.

Summer Jazz Program

Ed Doyle reported on the District's second annual Summer Jazz Program, supported in part by Title IV-A funding. The program was held August 4-7 and enrolled 60 middle and high school students, more than twice the previous year's enrollment. All four middle schools and all four high schools were represented. Students worked with professional jazz musicians and participated in four ensembles: vocal, saxophone, flex band, and big band. The program concluded with a student performance on Hanover Street in partnership with the Palace Theatre. Additional community partnerships provided students with opportunities to attend performances at Fisher Cats Stadium, the Rex Theatre, and the Spotlight Room. Local businesses also donated food and other resources. Mr. Doyle stated that the musical growth demonstrated by students was outstanding and anticipated that the experience would benefit the District's music programs throughout the school year.

Career and Technical Education Summer Experience

Nicole Doherty reported that 55 eighth-grade students participated in a Career and Technical Education summer experience from June 22-24. Students participated in hands-on activities involving baking, cosmetology, and entrepreneurship, including a "Shark Tank"-style activity. Ms. Doherty stated that students enjoyed exploring the various CTE opportunities.

Bookmobile

Ms. Whitney highlighted the District's continued partnership with the Manchester Public Library for the summer Bookmobile. The Bookmobile made 29 community stops in addition to visits connected with the 21st Century program. Approximately 70 volunteers and nine guest readers participated, and 1,629 children had received new books at the time of the presentation. New this year were take-home mathematics activities. The Girl Scouts also partnered with the program to provide STEM activities. Programming was expected to continue into the fall.

Additional Summer Learning Partnerships

Ms. Doherty discussed the District's continued partnership with the University of New Hampshire, which provided students with hands-on STEM opportunities, including robotics, coding, and technology experiences.

Fifteen seniors from Central, Memorial, West, and MST also traveled to Appledore Island at the Isles of Shoals to explore sustainability, engineering, and environmental topics.

Ms. Whitney additionally recognized Food and Nutrition Services and the Transportation Department for their support. She noted that summer programming planning begins in January and involves a significant team effort. She also reported that the District was successful in hiring Manchester School District employees to staff many of its summer programs.

Committee members thanked the Teaching and Learning team and community partners for the breadth of summer opportunities made available to students.

b. 2025-2026 End-of-Year Data – by Leslie Whitney, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning

Ms. Whitney and members of the Teaching and Learning team presented 2025-2026 end-of-year student achievement and assessment data. The team included: Joyce Lewis, Director of Comprehensive School Counseling; Tina Proulx, Middle School Academic Director; Geoff Giotas, High School Academic Director; Erin Kilrain, Elementary Math Implementation Specialist; and, Kristine Haveles-Pelletier, Elementary Literacy Implementation Specialist.

The presentation focused on i-Ready data for elementary and middle school students and PSAT data at the high school level.

Ms. Whitney explained that the goal was not simply to review test scores but to identify areas of progress, areas requiring additional attention, and ways the data will influence District priorities for 2026-2027.

The Committee received an overview of i-Ready, the District's K-8 diagnostic assessment. The assessment is administered three times annually for grades one through eight, while kindergarten students

begin testing in the winter. Ms. Whitney emphasized that i-Ready represents one data point and is considered alongside classroom evidence, teacher observations, and other assessments.

The adaptive assessment adjusts questions according to student responses and helps identify current skills and areas requiring additional instruction. District staff use the information to assist teachers with instructional planning, help students set goals, and provide families with information about student growth.

Elementary Reading

District staff reported a high assessment completion rate. Reading placement remained relatively consistent over the previous three spring assessment years. Forty-two percent of District students were at or above grade level, compared with 58% statewide and 53% nationally. Approximately 30% of District students were two or more grade levels below, compared with 19% statewide and 22% nationally. The Team emphasized continued work on core literacy instruction through Amplify CKLA, targeted interventions, student-growth monitoring, and the use of data to adjust instruction.

Positive trends included a reduction in the number of students two or more grade levels below, particularly in grades two through four. Grade three demonstrated particularly strong movement toward higher placement categories.

Middle School Reading

In grades five through eight, approximately half of students were consistently ready to receive grade-level instruction. Fall-to-spring data showed positive movement. The percentage of students two or more grade levels below decreased from 46% in the fall to 33% in the spring, while the percentage of students at early-on-grade-level or higher increased by 16 percentage points.

Students at all middle school grade levels demonstrated growth toward proficiency, with decreases in the number of students three or more grade levels below.

The team discussed ongoing work to unpack essential standards and provide differentiated support to students.

Mathematics

The District also reviewed mathematics data for elementary and middle school students. The Team acknowledged that District students continued to perform below state and national percentages but emphasized the importance of using individual student strengths and data to build toward grade-level competencies. The data reflected a decline in proficiency as students progressed from kindergarten through fourth grade. They explained that higher grades require students to master increasing numbers and complexity of competencies, a pattern also seen nationally.

Fall-to-spring data demonstrated meaningful student growth across grades one through eight. Middle school students at every grade level demonstrated progress toward proficiency, while the number of students three or more grade levels below decreased across all grade bands.

District staff attributed some of this growth to curriculum alignment, work with essential standards, differentiation, and the District's instructional coaching model.

High School PSAT Data

It was explained that 2025-2026 was the first year the District used PSAT data as its primary local high school assessment data. Freshmen took the PSAT 8/9, sophomores took the PSAT 10, and juniors took the PSAT/NMSQT in the fall and the state-required SAT in the spring. This was the first year of District-wide testing, historical comparison data was not yet available. In future years, the District will be able to analyze both grade-level data and cohort growth as students progress from freshman through junior year.

The District reported the following baseline PSAT information:

- Freshmen averaged 787, compared with a state average of 870. Fifteen percent met both College Board benchmarks, 47% met the reading and writing benchmark, and 16% met the mathematics benchmark.
- Sophomores averaged 826, compared with a state average of 921. Fifteen percent met both benchmarks, 46% met the reading and writing benchmark, and 16% met the mathematics benchmark.

- Juniors averaged 832 on the PSAT/NMSQT, compared with a state average of 973. Eleven percent met both benchmarks, 45% met the reading and writing benchmark, and 14% met the mathematics benchmark.

They explained that College Board skill-level data will be shared with teachers to identify gaps and inform instruction.

The District has established a goal of reaching an SAT score range of 942-962 for the 2028 assessment. They noted that the 2028 cohort will have participated in the District's testing and preparation approach during grades nine, ten, and eleven. The Teaching and Learning Department is working with principals, department leaders, and teachers to increase familiarity with College Board assessments and the foundational skills they measure. It was emphasized that the goal is not to "teach to the test," but to strengthen foundational mathematics, literacy, and problem-solving skills that are also applicable to assessments such as the ASVAB and Accuplacer.

Next Steps

The District's next steps include increasing student ownership of learning through data conversations and goal setting, providing timely interventions at the elementary level, increasing student voice and engagement at the middle school level, and using data to identify appropriate pathways and interventions at the high school level.

Questions and comments from the committee included:

1. Committee members questioned the team about their overall interpretation of the results. Teaching and Learning team expressed optimism, citing improved access to data, instructional tools, professional learning, and a developing culture around assessment.
2. There was a discussion the importance of encouraging positive attitudes toward mathematics and allowing students to experience "productive struggle" while learning mathematical concepts.
3. Assessment participation among multilingual learners and special education students was also discussed. The team explained that some students with IEPs participate in Dynamic Learning Maps rather than the standard assessment. Newcomer students who have been in the United States for one year or less have certain assessment exemptions, although multilingual learners participate in required ACCESS testing. Newcomer students do participate in mathematics testing.

4. Committee members emphasized the significant fall-to-spring growth reflected in the data and discussed the importance of examining growth within the District in addition to comparisons with state and national benchmarks.
5. The Committee also discussed spring-to-spring data and differences among individual schools and grade levels. They acknowledged that achievement gaps tend to grow as some students progress through the District. The Teaching and Learning team reviewed school-level data with principals over the summer to identify individual needs, resources, and strategies. The team clarified that i-Ready is used as a District diagnostic assessment, while Ready Mathematics is a separate curriculum product from the same company.
6. The Committee discussed student engagement with computerized assessments, particularly at the middle school level. The team acknowledged that developmental differences may affect how seriously students approach assessments and reported that the District is exploring whether the PSAT could potentially be administered to eighth-grade students in the future. Any significant change would involve staff and community input and would return to the Committee for a full presentation.

8. Tango Flight Curriculum Funds – by Keith Puglisi, Principal of Manchester School of Technology

Ms. Doherty presented the request on behalf of the Career and Technical Education aviation program. Tango Flight provides students with hands-on aviation experiences through a student-centered, team-based model. Students learn about aircraft and aviation systems, maintenance and inspection, aircraft structure and assembly, and related aviation, engineering, and technical careers.

In spring 2025, the Board approved transferring \$14,873 from the Early Childhood Program to support the aviation program. Those funds covered annual curriculum costs, inspections, training, mentorship, and ongoing technical support and have now been fully expended.

Ms. Doherty requested **\$14,873 from the Teaching and Learning Trust** to continue covering the annual program costs. Approximately 20 students participate each year, with class size intentionally limited to preserve the hands-on nature of the program.

The Aviation Museum provides the aircraft materials, while the District is responsible for curriculum, training, technical support, and inspection-related costs.

*On motion of **Committee Member Smith**, duly seconded by **Committee Member Stewart**, it was moved to approve to approve the utilization of \$14,873 from the Teaching and Learning Trust to support the Manchester School of Technology aviation program, and forward this item to the full Board of School Committee for approval. Committee Members Turner and Georges were absent. All present were in favor and the motion passed.*

9. Manchester School District 2026-2027 Assessment Calendar – by Leslie Whitney, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning

Ms. Whitney presented the 2026-2027 Assessment Calendar for approval. The calendar provides a coordinated schedule for required District and state assessments and aligns testing windows with instructional priorities, professional learning schedules, and state requirements. It is intended to support effective planning, minimize disruption to instruction, and promote consistent assessment practices. The calendar also includes required parent-notification timelines.

She clarified that the dates shown represent testing windows rather than the number of days individual students are tested. Schools have flexibility to establish their own testing schedules within those windows based on their instructional schedules and individual needs.

Questions and comments from the committee included:

1. It was asked how a future decision to administer the PSAT to eighth-grade students could affect the calendar. Ms. Whitney explained that PSAT dates are coordinated with the College Board and the New Hampshire Department of Education and that any significant change involving eighth-grade testing would return to the Committee as a separate presentation.
2. There was discussion regarding Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM). It was explained that DLM results are incorporated into the District's overall state assessment data. The number of DLM students within individual grades may be very small, the District must protect student confidentiality and therefore does not generally disaggregate the information publicly.

*On motion of **Committee Member Smith**, duly seconded by **Committee Member Stewart**, it was moved to approve the 2026/2027 Assessment Calendar, including required assessments and parent notification timelines, as presented, and forward this item to the full Board of School Committee for approval. Committee Members Turner and Georges were absent. All present were in favor and the motion passed.*

**10. Professional Development Overview for the 2026-2027 School Year – by
Leslie Whitney, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning**

Ms. Whitney provided an overview of professional development for the 2026-2027 school year. More than 100 new staff participated in new staff orientation at Southern New Hampshire University, with approximately 120 individuals in attendance overall. SNHU provided the location at no cost and supported the event through its partnership with the District.

New teacher orientation was scheduled to follow, with a specific focus on onboarding. The District will also continue its mentorship program throughout the school year with grant support. Staff will return to their individual schools for principal welcomes, followed by additional District professional development.

October 9 will be a District professional learning day offering a variety of opportunities, including technology integration, CPI training, and other professional learning. Safety-related training will continue to be emphasized, including ALICE and required Vector training.

New for 2026-2027 will be voluntary after-school professional learning opportunities in which teachers will provide training to other teachers. Sessions will generally be one hour or less and may be offered virtually or in person.

Ms. Whitney explained that the program is intended to provide flexible professional growth opportunities while developing internal teacher leadership. Topics will be influenced by feedback collected through exit tickets following professional development sessions.

11. Teaching and Learning Highlights/Updates – by Nicole Doherty, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools, Teaching and Learning

Ms. Doherty provided several Teaching and Learning updates.

Federal/Title I Funding

The District received confirmation of its Title I allocation and school eligibility determinations. Webster now qualifies for Title I funding, while Weston does not. Ms. Doherty emphasized that this change will not reduce literacy services at either school. Both Webster and Weston will continue to have reading specialists; the funding source for those positions will simply differ. When asked whether federal structural changes had affected how the District applies for or reports federal funds, Ms. Doherty indicated that no changes had occurred at that time.

Artificial Intelligence

Ms. Doherty reported that the District continues to develop expectations, procedures, tools, and training surrounding responsible and effective use of artificial intelligence. The District AI Committee met throughout the summer to continue its policy and procedure work. During the administrative institute, principals received an overview of artificial intelligence within the Manchester School District, including updated AI Policy 766 and Procedure 7766-R. Training addressed responsible use, five assigned levels of AI use, grade-level guidance, academic integrity, student privacy and data security, staff and student responsibilities, and District-approved AI applications. Professional development was scheduled to begin with high school staff on September 1, followed by middle school staff in November and elementary staff in March.

The District's goal is to introduce AI thoughtfully and responsibly while maintaining human decision-making, critical thinking, academic integrity, and student safety.

Questions and comments from the committee included:

1. Committee Member Stewart questioned why elementary staff training was scheduled for March given that elementary students may already encounter AI outside of school. It was explained that the District wants elementary education to remain developmentally appropriate, human-centered, and less reliant on screen time. At the same time, the District recognizes that students already encounter generative AI through common technology and internet searches. Principals have therefore already

received resources and training to support staff and students. The District is also partnering with SchoolAI through grant funding for professional development. The AI Committee will continue evaluating needs, and information regarding safe and effective AI use will also be shared with families during Community Connect events.

Ed 306 Policies

Ms. Doherty reported that work continues on policies related to the New Hampshire Ed 306 requirements. She is working with two Board members on attendance and grading policies. Once a solid draft has been developed, the policies will be reviewed by a committee that includes principals and teachers before being brought forward to the Board. Work has also begun on policies related to career exploration, readiness and pathway credentials, and remote learning. These policies will be brought to the Committee for review when drafts are complete.

Dual Language Programs

Ms. Doherty reported that both dual language programs are fully staffed and enrollment continues to grow. The French kindergarten class had 15 students enrolled, while two Spanish classes had enrollments of 15 and 16 students. A comprehensive multilingual learner and dual language presentation was scheduled for the next Committee meeting and will include student data, progress, and continued development of the programs.

12. Upcoming Teaching and Learning Meeting Date: September 22, 2026 @ 5:30 pm

- Attendance, Behavior, and Core Curriculum Presentation -
- Dual Language Program Update
- Adult Education Program Update
- Curriculum Management Plan

Chair Parr stated that the next Committee on Teaching and Learning meeting was scheduled for **September 22, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.**

Anticipated agenda items included:

- McLaughlin Middle School ABC presentation;
- Dual Language Program update;
- Adult Education Program update; and
- Curriculum Management Plan.

13. TABLED ITEMS

There were no tabled items.

14. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business presented.

15. ADJOURNMENT

If there is no further business, a motion is in order to adjourn.

*On motion of **Committee Member Smith**, duly seconded by **Committee Member Stewart**, it was moved to adjourn. All were in favor, meeting adjourned at 6:48 p.m.*

True Copy. Attest.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Angela McCaray".

Clerk of Committee