



# The Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Regional School Districts



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## Superintendent of Schools Town Report - 2025

### Where are We Focusing?

These are areas where specific attention has been paid to improving and strengthening performance, results, and communication across our schools and grades.

#### Instructional Leadership Focus

- Learning walks tied to ILT school-based planning guides;
- Principal coaching cycles with Focus Schools;
- Monthly DLT meetings with professional development in instructional leadership; and
- Accountability to district-wide assessment systems, data cycles, and curriculum implementation

#### District-wide Targeted Learning Focus: Writing

- Established a district-wide targeted learning focus;
- Supported school-based targeted learning focus development;
- Aligned current resources and initiatives to support writing across all content and grade levels; and
- Looking at local student work to compare with state student work exemplars

#### Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

- Continued work with CES and the Joy and Justice team;
- Training for all paraprofessionals;
- Creation of a teacher toolkit to address incidents of bias in our schools; and
- Communication Tools

#### Area in development

Monthly newsletters to include:

- Curriculum, assessment, and instruction areas of growth; and
- Shared district-wide student achievement data for areas of celebration and growth

### Enough Abuse Partnership

The Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Regional School Districts have pursued a partnership with [Enough Abuse](#), an organization dedicated to preventing sexual abuse of children in school districts across Massachusetts. The District Leadership Team (DLT) has worked with Enough Abuse to create a plan of action that includes: 1.) professional development to educate all staff about ensuring the safety of all students in our care; 2.) requiring all staff to complete a course created by the Enough Abuse organization to establish clear and consistent expectations for appropriate relationships between all adults and students in our school districts; and 3.) review of our policies, procedures and protocols by Enough Abuse to identify ways to recognize and stop boundary-crossing behaviors (staff texting

students beyond school hours, for example) which can lead to inappropriate relationships between adults and students.

What have we done:

- The DLT has participated in the Enough Abuse screening tool and professional development (PD).
- With Jetta Bernier from Enough Abuse, we have developed PD content for the entire staff.
- Staff have completed the PD training and an online module, for which they must earn a score of 85%. A certificate of completion is then awarded. The module takes staff through a typical situation and guides trainees on how to respond appropriately. The final test confirms what the staffer has learned and offers the confidence to come forward in any instance of suspected or confirmed abuse.
- We now include Enough Abuse content in our annual staff training, in addition to the mandatory [51A training](#).
- We have updated our hiring policies and protocols to ask specific questions about prior DCF findings and former work experience where a resignation was taken in lieu of termination.
- We conducted building walkthroughs and surveyed students about unsafe spaces in our schools.
- We are working to bring family resources and student curriculum to identify boundary-crossing behaviors and ways to keep our children safe.

Ensuring the safety and well-being of our students and staff is our highest priority. Please know that when an individual is hired in the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont School Districts, they must be fingerprinted and are subject to both a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) review and a Sexual Offender Registry Information (SORI) review. In addition, our employee handbook, policies, and procedures specifically outline the professional conduct we expect of all adults in our employment.

### **Curriculum Check: Assessing and Adjusting Toward Achievement**

In our districts, with nearly 900 students and 200 staff, implementing practices and understanding how those changes affect learning takes time. As we watch for change to reveal itself, we collect and use data to 1.) inform ourselves about student learning, and 2.) make decisions about instruction to best meet student needs. Continued data collection and review help the administration remain responsive to students throughout the school year, ensuring they are learning and growing in their skill sets and that we are pushing them to their potential. Some of the ways we collect information include:

- informally in the classroom through observation and discussion;
- regularly in small and ongoing assessments like quizzes, interviews, and exit tickets; and
- more formally through standardized assessments like DIBELS, unit tests, projects, and papers.

Tests like MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System), Advanced Placement (AP) exams, and SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) scores provide much broader measures that offer a sense of the big picture. We are also working within a framework set by DESE for improvement targets.

(Categories and descriptions [may be found here.](#)) While our districts' schools, like those across the nation, still show learning loss from the pandemic, overall, our districts are classified as making "moderate progress" toward targets. All schools are performing at this level except for Colrain Central, which has an achievement level of "Substantial Progress" toward targets. And last year, Hawlemont Regional earned a "School of Distinction" recognition for its improvement efforts.

Addressing the concerns in science, middle school and high school (specifically biology) are seeing a new science curriculum. We've added concentrated blocks of time for math practice and implemented smaller, more frequent ways of testing understanding (and are seeing concrete evidence of growth from the Fall to the Spring). As for literacy, we've seen steady improvement, with students starting the school year reading at or above their grade level, as a result of work done in the previous spring. Additionally, we are doing a better job of addressing students who have been identified as needing more support and offering them that support.

We continue to shift towards more meaningful teaching and learning strategies (like Standards-Based Teaching and Learning (SBTL)) that result in content mastery and the application of skills in the classroom, as well as measurable success on standardized state assessments.

### **Student Voice**

Student-Led Conferences (SLCs) continue to be our version of a parent-teacher conference in which students take a leadership role and are held twice a year. To prepare for the conference, students have reflection time and mini-work sessions during their advisory block. A template is provided to ensure students address their progress toward academic standards, what they are most proud of, what can be celebrated, areas for growth, and what teachers and families can do to support their goals.

An additional forum in which MTRS high school students were encouraged was a summit focused on the theme "Your Voice. Your School. Your Future." The event provided a platform for students to share their experiences and play a key role in reimagining the future of Mohawk Trail Regional School. Our students heard from special guest Gaelin Elmore, who presented on themes of belonging, trusted environments, and vulnerable authenticity. Students then moved into small work groups led by students to discuss big ideas and practical actions related to what matters most to them at Mohawk Trail Regional School. This work will continue into 2026-2027.

### **Smithsonian Institute In District**

How fortunate we were at Mohawk Trail Regional to have hosted the Smithsonian Institute's Museum on Main Street traveling exhibit from April 17 through May 29. The small but mighty exhibit became part of our everyday life, bringing knowledge, cause for consideration, new friends, and a renewed sense of community to the space and beyond. NEPM's Fabulous 413 came by - have a listen to the interview and tour here: <https://podcasts.apple.com/.../may-27.../id1669577464...>

Students from classrooms around the building and district visited with assignments in hand, allowing the exhibit to enrich their learning. Visitors from the community discovered the richness of the content that only the Smithsonian Institute can provide. Events hosted around the topic of Voices and Votes: Democracy In America demonstrated our appreciation for the depth and breadth of the topic and offered a forum for learning, sharing, and growth.

We offer our thanks to: Mass Humanities for making it possible for the Museum on Main Street exhibit to travel to Mohawk Trail Regional School; Mass Cultural Council and other local cultural councils for their part in supporting the initiative and related events; local historical societies and organizations for donating items for the display of local artifacts related to democracy; The Mary Lyon Foundation for their support of the events; The Charlemont Forum, Center for New Americans, League of Women Voters of Franklin County, The Art Garden, and all speakers, panelists and special guests; Falls Cable TV for broadcasting events and making recordings available; the group of dutiful volunteer docents; students and teachers who fortified their knowledge through the exhibit; all the visitors who made time to attend events and view the exhibit; and the planning committee.

### **Sustainability Study**

The Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Regional School Districts acknowledge that the trends of declining enrollment, rising operational costs, relatively flat state aid, and increasing needs of our student body have made the districts' current operations financially unsustainable. These trends are national and are directly affecting our communities, creating financial concerns for our school districts, our member towns, and their taxpayers. During 2025, in Phases I and II of the [2 Districts 8 Towns sustainability project](#), community conversations, meetings with town leaders, and extensive research and reporting took place. The project has moved into Phase III with consultant BERK12. Most recently, the Educational Visioning group has met to preserve what our community values most, expand opportunities for all learners, and enhance our schools with new possibilities that reflect the needs of today's students and families. Also, community members are self-selecting to participate in field trips to gather first-hand information to make solid decisions about the future of our own school districts. Site visits have been to schools in the Berkshires and Gateway Regional, where volunteer representatives asked a variety of questions to gain a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities when taking on a consolidation.

### **Rural Advocacy**

In June, the Superintendent traveled to the State House with 4 students to lobby for increased rural aid. They participated in a hearing by [sharing their personal stories on the floor](#). We are aligned with [Rural Schools Advocacy in Massachusetts](#) to create a movement to increase rural aid. As a rural school district, we struggle with bridging financial and other resource gaps. The 38 rural school

districts that educate 38,000+ Massachusetts students need and deserve rural aid that addresses our needs. Our advocacy has been and will continue to be around these three issues:

- reinstating \$4 million in rural aid removed from the FY26 Massachusetts budget; the original proposed amount was \$16 million, but was later reduced to \$12 million.
- ensuring the legislature honors Governor Maura Healey's FY27 rural aid proposal of \$20 million.
- Since the Commission on the Fiscal Health of Rural School Districts report was released in July 2022, the State was recommended to appropriate \$60 million in rural school aid annually. Our voices will continue to advocate for that recommended amount.

In November, we took part in then Massachusetts State Representative Natalie Blais' office hours held at the Elmer's Community Center/Wicked Good Cafe in Ashfield, where Buz Eisenberg of [WHMP's Talk the Talk broadcast live](#) as guests, including Superintendent Stanton, who spoke on the topic of rural aid and food access. (Listen for Stanton at the 19:20 mark.) At that same time, we partnered with the Mary Lyon Foundation on a twice-a-week food distribution program when SNAP benefits were defunded. Mary Lyon Foundation secured the food donations, and District Nurse Leader Donna Weber, with the help of volunteers, coordinated the school-based program at the school buildings.

### **Green Initiatives**

Schools in the Mohawk Trail Regional School District are starting 2026 off with a renewed commitment to our composting program. We are partnered with the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District, which visits to present on composting and recycling in the school setting, which is an initiative that has been running since 2012 at Mohawk Trail Regional School.

### **Wrapping Up**

It is a pleasure and an honor to continue serving as your Superintendent of Schools, and I look forward to our work together.

Sheryl L. Stanton

Superintendent

Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Regional School Districts

*Where Learning and Growth is our Focus and Community, and Courage is our Path*