

To: Carlisle Public Schools Community

My name is Amy McKinstry, and I have been a DESE certified strategic planning facilitator for the last eight years. I am also the current Superintendent of the Northbridge Public Schools. The framework that is utilized when I work with districts to conduct their strategic planning is called *Planning for Success*.

Planning for Success is Massachusetts' approach to helping school districts create thoughtful, coherent plans that genuinely support student learning. The process unfolds across three interconnected phases—*Create*, *Align*, and *Implement*—and is designed to help districts move from understanding their needs, to developing a focused long-term strategy, to carrying out and monitoring that strategy in a meaningful way. At its core, Planning for Success emphasizes that strong plans are built not by a small group working in isolation, but by bringing together the voices of staff, students, families, and community partners. When many perspectives are included, the district gains a more accurate understanding of what is working, where challenges persist, and what hopes and expectations people hold for their schools.

The process begins with a careful look at a wide range of data, such as student achievement results, feedback from families and educators, and information about district systems. This analysis helps districts clarify their purpose—expressed through a shared mission, vision, and core values—and develop a theory of action that explains how certain strategies will lead to better outcomes for students. From there, districts identify a small number of major improvement priorities, called strategic objectives, and outline the initiatives that will bring those priorities to life. Because this work is grounded in broad input and clear data, it helps ensure that the district's long-term plan reflects community priorities and remains focused on what truly matters for student success.

Once the multi-year plan is in place, the district develops an annual action plan that identifies the specific steps that will move the work forward during the year. This includes defining who will do what, when it will happen, and what early signs of progress the district should begin to see. These early signs—changes in practice, behavior, or experience—help the district understand whether its efforts are heading in the right direction long before final outcomes are measured. Throughout implementation, the district regularly reviews evidence, adjusts strategies as needed, and ensures that resources, professional development, evaluation systems, and school-level planning all support the same shared vision.

Ultimately, Planning for Success is about building coherence and trust across the entire district. By inviting diverse voices into the planning process and grounding decisions in clear data and shared goals, districts can create plans that not only guide their work but also strengthen understanding, transparency, and partnership among all stakeholders. This collaborative approach leads to stronger implementation, better alignment of resources, and improved outcomes for students.

To start the planning process, I would ask that each of you complete the SWOT survey at the following link: [Carlisle SWOT Survey](#), by no later than December 31, as we will be analyzing this data at our first meeting session.

Thank you for your willingness to be a part of this exciting process, and I am very much looking forward to working with each of you.