We began our process for developing the fiscal year 2021 budget in late November. I’m pleased to report to you that we have made significant progress to date. We have completed our budget collaborative meetings with all principals and department heads. We are on track to complete school council meetings featuring an agenda item soliciting input on the budget at each of the 25 schools. What is more, we have successfully hosted two community forums on the budget, created in online feedback portal on the Lynn Public Schools website, and there will be additional input-gathering events in the coming weeks, including but not limited to meetings with students and the parent advisory bodies for special education and English Learners. In total, we have more input to solicit, but we are well-positioned to bring to bear our strategic plan, recent feedback, requests, and other pertinent data on a proposal that will ultimately be presented in this forum. Given the release of the governor’s budget on January 22, 2020, it seemed prudent to provide a brief update. More updates to follow as the process unfolds.

In years past, there has been a presentation on suspension data and related strategies designed to reduce them system-wide. To be clear, the desire to reduce is both from a belief that out-of-school suspensions may not always be a solution or result in changed behavior as well as what research says about the link between suspensions and later incarceration (School to Prison Pipeline). Rather than a full presentation, I am sharing the data and providing you with updates to intervention and strategy.

Clear in the document provided, the Lynn Public Schools continues to maintain suspension rates, the lowest on record. No single initiative is responsible for the preservation of the lower rate. A compilation of efforts ranging from increased social emotional supports, to the addition of the PASS program (Positive Alternative to School Suspension), to alternatives to out of school suspension all play a role. It is our belief that as the district increases mental health supports and the number of schools embracing the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and as those already participating deepen protocols and supports, the percentage will continue to decline.

The number of suspensions is on the rise at the middle school level. Undoubtedly, data might shift slightly in one direction or another from year to year due to a host of factors. Nonetheless, the middle school data is trending upward and it is due in part to issues related to vaping. Part of the solution exists in education and there’s an effort in that realm. What is more, we need to build a more targeted intervention for middle school students engaged with substance, perhaps use something similar to the PASS program at the high school level.
The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has not yet released 2019 graduation and dropout data. Data will be prepared and shared with you when that happens, but there are new support and intervention strategies being implemented, namely Youth Harbors (YH). YH is a Justice Resource Institute program that serves homeless, unaccompanied high school students. Students fitting these descriptors are 87% more likely than their housed peers to drop out of high school. YH-eligible students are ambitious, hard-working students who are determined to complete their high school education. This is difficult, however, when considering the hierarchy of need (food and housing). YH works to ensure that these youth are safely housed and given all the tools and skills they need to be able to focus on their future and achieve success.

YH offers a wrap-around service delivery model to meet each youth's individual needs. Students are deemed eligible for the program based solely on the criteria of being unaccompanied and homeless and offered a host of services including, but not limited to:

- Housing
- Individualized Life Skills Workshops
  These workshops are individually tailored to each student, vary widely, and can include workshops that are:
  - Career-Oriented (finding a job, writing a resume, or interview skills).
  - Domestic (Cooking food safely, maintaining an apartment, negotiating roommate relationships).
  - Academic (Planning educational goals, connecting with academic tutors.
  - Financial (Managing a budget, paying bills on time, learning to save).

The program is flexible to meet the unique needs of each homeless youth. Clients generally stay in the program for a total of 6 to 12 months, after which they are eligible for alumni services.

The Lynn Public Schools is partnered with Youth Harbors and is excited to share that we are currently in the process of hiring a full-time social worker and full-time case manager who will provide intensive wrap around support for our homeless and unaccompanied youth.

We are excited about weaving this support into our dropout prevention effort. It is much-needed, targeted, and effective.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patrick Tutwiler, Superintendent