

IT IS NOW 2019, WHAT HAS CHANGED?

The New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies (NHCPPS) wrote in *Manchester's Education Benchmarks: Using data to map a pathway to success, September 2014*. "The future of Manchester's school system has implications for every aspect of the city's life: economic vitality, civic life, health and well-being of its residents, and beyond. More broadly, Manchester's schools are a vital piece of the statewide education system. **The question now facing district leaders is how to harness the strengths of the district's changing demographics, while adopting new policies to address the challenges the schools are still facing to provide the education Manchester students deserve.**"

- **Improving public understanding of the challenges facing Manchester's children should be a priority for the city's leaders.**
- Disparities in student success persist at many levels and few show any trend toward closing.
- These "achievement gaps" between student subgroups (including racial/ethnic background, economic status, disability status, and English-language learner status) can be seen in many measurements: early school readiness, standardized test scores, high school graduation rates, and post-secondary performance, among others. In many cases, the gaps between student subpopulations have remained steady for years, or are actually growing. **The student achievement gap is widening.**
- In 2014, roughly 8 percent of all public school students in New Hampshire attended school in Manchester, the largest share for a single district. In 2016-17 that percentage grew to 13%. It remains the largest District in the state.
- In 2014, more than 70 languages are spoken by city students, and the student body is among the most diverse in Northern New England.
- **Across the district, there is great variation in the low-income student population from school to school.**
- In 2017-18, the share of students eligible for free/reduced meals last year ranged from 93 percent at Beech Street Elementary School to 23 at Green Acres Elementary School. In 2017-18 The district wide rate was 58 percent last year, more than twice the statewide rate of 26 percent.
- **The district's student body has been growing more diverse in terms of racial and ethnic composition.**
- In 2016-17 the percent of students that were identified as white was 60 percent. **Forty percent** of students are non-white, including African American, Asian, Hispanic, Native American or multi-racial. The student diversity in the city has consistently increased over the years.
- New Hampshire's statewide non-white student population in 2016-17 was 16 percent.
- **Manchester's ability to raise money for education is not keeping pace with the rest of the state.**
- Whereas Manchester's per-pupil valuation was equal to between 80 percent and 84 percent of the statewide value in the early 2000s, it now stands at 78 percent of the statewide value. What this means is that, for most of the past decade, Manchester's ability to raise money for public schools has not kept pace with the rest of the state, with less taxable property available on a per-pupil basis from year to year.
- Manchester's per-pupil spending has been among the lowest in the state. In the 2012-13 school year, Manchester spent about \$10,400 per pupil, the fifth lowest figure in the state. In 2017-2018, Manchester spent \$12,024 per pupil, that was \$3,841 lower than the state average of \$15,865.
- **Now Manchester spends the lowest in the state per pupil.**
- **Class size in Manchester averages are significantly higher than the state averages.**
- On October 1, 2018, the state average for grades 1 and 2 was 17, grades 3 and 4 was 19, grades 5 to 8 was 20. In Manchester it was 21, 23, and 24 respectively. However, discrepancy exist among schools. Largest was 27, 29, 30, respectively.

In order to address some of these continuing issues, the Manchester Education Association (MEA) proposed the following to the Board of School Committee (BOSC) during negotiations:

The proposal of joint committees to explore the following issues:

- *to review special education caseloads and case management responsibilities at all educational levels.*
- *to review behavior response strategies and programs, including CPI and Restorative Justice practices.*
- *to review the Unified Arts caseloads in grades Pre-12.*
- *to review the current number of children identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Grades Pre-12 and conduct a longitudinal study to determine the potential, long-range needs of children with this disorder.*
- *to review the potential of the inclusion of partial “flexible” scheduling for staff and/or programs with the intent of creating new opportunities for students for academic support, access to learning areas, and social-emotional growth.*
- *to evaluate a program to enable educators to become credentialed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.*
- *to study if sufficient textbooks and related materials, including teacher materials and equipment are in place to ensure that each pupil in a classroom has equal opportunity.*

In order to address the class size issue and adequate counselors, the MEA proposed that the BOSC follow its policy and national guidelines:

Recognizing that class size is an important factor in providing quality education the Board will make reasonable efforts to exceed the maximum standards established in Board policy.

No guidance counselor shall have more than a total of 325 students. The Board agrees to implement the American Counseling Association standards for guidance counselor student loads.

Educators want a voice in the administration quality in the buildings and MEA asked for that opportunity:

We believe a shared assessment process can improve performances and actions of Principals and administrative teams. Staff in the buildings will be able to evaluate a principal’s and administrative team’s leadership capabilities that improve educator and student performance. All staff will be given the opportunity to complete an anonymous evaluation of their building administrative teams as well as District administration on an annual basis. Results of the evaluations will be used to guide the District’s actions. Evaluations will go to the Superintendent and/or the Assistant Superintendent.

MEA wants safety for all staff and students. MEA proposed:

The Board agrees to maintain classrooms in accordance with all fire and safety codes, except in the case of emergencies (lock-downs, etc) the number of persons in a classroom shall not exceed the fire and safety codes.

Both parties agree that the safety of the staff and the students are paramount. To that end, Columbine locks will be installed on all classroom doors by the start of the 2018-19 school year. All classroom windows will have shades for their interior doors and all first-floor exterior windows will have shades, which can be drawn in an emergency.

ALL THESE PROPOSALS WERE REJECTED BY THE BOARD OF SCHOOL COMMITTEE



The New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies is an independent, nonpartisan organization that pursues data-based research on public policy matters, develops options, informs policy makers and advises them about choices for action.

New Hampshire Department of Education