



Superintendent-Director End-of-Year Report June 18, 2025

Introduction

The purpose of this End-of-Year Report is to provide the Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School District Committee with a year-end update of progress made within the context of our [5-Year Strategic Plan](#) and the Superintendent [SMARTIE Goals](#) approved by the Committee in October 2024. This is a follow-up to the [Mid-Cycle Review](#) presented in January 2024. Our mission is to continue preparing our students for the skills needed to enter a competitive workforce, post-secondary institution, and to be committed members of the larger community, in short, *technical, agricultural, and academic excellence*.

During the second half of SY2025, the District continued the professional learning opportunities with Michael McDowell from Hinge Education and continued our work related to equity with Dr. Kenann McKenzie-DeFranza from Gordon College. The Leadership team read and discussed *Changeable* by J. Stuart Albon to learn more about collaborative problem solving.

Personal Growth and Development Statement

I am proud to continue representing ENSATS as a board member for the [North Shore Chamber of Commerce](#), the [Massachusetts Partnership for Youth](#), [SkillsUSA](#), [MassHire](#), and the [Frederick E. Berry Institute of Politics](#). As a member of the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators (MAVA), I am the immediate past President of the organization and serve as the vocational representative on the [Commonwealth Corporation](#) board. This work is important as it provides insight into workforce trends and supports students along their educational and career pathways. I continue as a member of [MASS REDI](#) subcommittee by engaging in discussions related to education.

Throughout the school year, I attended and hosted several community events and expanded partnership opportunities with the District. One such event is the Larkin ribbon-cutting ceremony held in the new space and attended by several officials, including the Secretary of Education, Dr. Patrick Tutwiler.

I continue to be a visiting associate professor at Fitchburg State University. This allows me to stay active in new pedagogical advances as they relate to career and technical education.

This report will focus on the following three key areas of our District:

- Student Learning Goal - to foster high expectations and belonging
- Professional Practice Goal - to promote partnerships
- District Improvement Goal - to expand regional development

Student Learning Goal Highlights



- **Early College & Dual Enrollment** - Students have earned over 1000 college credits through the NSCC Early College Designation Program and Dual Enrollment and 48 students from the Class of 2025 graduated and completed the Early College Program. One Culinary Arts student also completed their first year of college at Johnson & Wales University while concurrently graduating from Essex Tech, earning 32 college credits during their Senior year.
- **Massachusetts Seal of Biliteracy** - This school year marked the second year of presenting students with the Massachusetts Seal of Biliteracy, with twenty students earning the seal and three with distinction. Medals were made in the Advanced Manufacturing Program.
- **Express Yourself Integration Academy** - Beginning in January through May 2025, Essex Tech students worked with an artist at Express Yourself (EXYO) to create dance movements that were showcased at the Wang Center in May.
- **Culture Fair** - On May 15th, we celebrated our second annual Culture Fair, facilitated by Ms. Herrera and Ms. Rajan and the student members of U-ACT and our Latino Student Organization. Over 50 students shared art, dance, food, information, and traditional dress from around the world with their peers.
- **Genocide Studies Exhibition** - In May 2025, the students in our Genocide Studies classes presented their annual Genocide Studies Exhibition, where students displayed their year-long genocide research projects.
- **Mental Health Awareness & Resources** - Essex Tech increased our community's access to Mental Health resources throughout the school year. The District continued its partnerships with the [NAN Project](#), [Mental Makeover](#), and [the Dirty Hands Project](#) to increase students', families', and staff's access to mental health services and programming. The School Counseling Department, in collaboration with the Wellness Department, executed a whole-school Universal Mental Health Screens Program this year. Our Give-Guide-Get campaign was promoted throughout the year and especially during Mental Health Awareness Month in May.
- **Certifications** - CTAE programs hold several credentials upon graduating. This includes trade certificates, licenses, and hours toward apprenticeship.
- **OSHA** - 449 Sophomores received in-person training from instructors or administration for their OSHA 10 certification. With the increase of staff OSHA trainers(to date 10 general industry trainers and 8 construction trainers) we eliminated using CareerSafe, an online OSHA training platform.
- **Cooperative Education** - We posted our highest numbers to date: [May 2025 Annual Co-op Report](#).
- **SkillsUSA National Leadership Conference** - Eight Essex Tech SkillsUSA students will attend the national competition in Atlanta in June 2025.
- **FFA Convention and Expo** - Several Essex Tech students competed at the state level and will travel to Nationals in Indianapolis in October 2025.



- **Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA)** - Our Essex Tech DECA chapter had a team of 80 students attend the district competition in December. This year, 35 students advanced to the state competition in Boston, and 13 of our members qualified for the international competition.
- **Appreciation Days and Weeks** - We celebrated Administrative Assistant Appreciation Day, Bus Driver Appreciation Day, Assistant Principal's Day, Principal's Day, School Nurse's Day, and Teacher Appreciation Week during spring 2025.
- **National Honor Society / National Technical Honor Society** - Over 100 students were inducted into the National Honor Society and the National Technical Honor Society in May.
- **Sophomore Semi-Formal Dance** - We held our first-ever Sophomore Semi-Formal dance on Friday, February 7, 2025, in the high school Gymnasium.
- **Junior Prom** - Our first Junior Prom was held on June 6, 2025, at the Doubletree Hotel.
- **National Signing Day** - We held our second annual signing day for those directly entering the workforce. The event was planned by Akram Mchiti, and Karen Andreas, President and CEO of the North Shore Chamber of Commerce, was the Keynote Speaker.
- **Pinning Ceremonies** - We held three pinning ceremonies for our Dental Assisting, Health Assisting, and Veterinary Science students. These students were awarded pins in recognition of their hard work and completion of a state credential.
- **Senior Awards Ceremony** - On May 6, 2025, we held our annual Senior Award Ceremony with 133 total awards presented to 103 students. The awards included memorial scholarships, academic achievements, CTAE achievements, and leadership awards.
- **Senior Prom** - On May 27, 2025, we held our Senior Prom at the New England Aquarium. Family members and friends had the opportunity to see and photograph their senior promenade in the Main Gymnasium before boarding a bus to Boston. Almost 600 students participated in the Prom this year, and it was a beautiful evening!
- **Graduation** - On May 29, 2025, we held our 11th-annual graduation ceremony with 419 members of the Class of 2025 receiving their diplomas. English teacher, Timothy Johnson, delivered our keynote address. Our Valedictorian, Brooke Sargent; Salutatorian, Joss Ebersole; our MAVA Outstanding Vocational Technical Student, Logan Schevis; and the Class of 2025 President, Akram Mchiti, all delivered exceptional speeches to their classmates, families, and friends. The successful graduation ceremony was truly the result of a team effort between the administrative team, the Facilities, Farm, & Grounds crew, the clerical team, our senior class advisors, and our students.
- We will hold our [Skillful Teacher](#) course for new teachers in August, with educators from Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School and Greater Lawrence Technical High School in attendance.
- We will continue to have staff members complete their OSHA 30 and Train the Trainer certification through MAVA at other vocational schools.



- **Admissions** - The District has accepted 525 students for the Class of 2029. We continue to review data internally and through the subcommittee meetings. You can find the Admissions Dashboard [here](#). We will continue to accept applicants from the waitlist as seats become available.
- **Collaboration Meetings with HTF** - In our ongoing efforts to maintain a strong working relationship with the Hathorne Teachers' Foundation, we held regular meetings with a team of administrators and a team of union members. These meetings provided a forum for administration and faculty members to discuss potential challenges and collaboratively develop solutions.

Performing Arts

We continue to increase the number of ways to bring the performing arts to life at Essex Tech with our 3rd-annual **Talent Show** on April 17, 2025. This event, coordinated by our Dance Teacher, Ms. Cocco, and the Essex Stars Dance Team, was a great success. Over 20 students and several staff members participated in the show, and the audience seats were full of supportive students, staff, and family members during both performances.

Drama Club: Mamma Mia

The Drama Club held its spring drama performance the weekend of May 9, 2025. It was a great success!

Athletics

We completed our second year in the Cape Ann League for athletics. This is still a growing process for our teams with tougher competition, but we had the most student-athletes to date.

Kindness Week

Thanks to School Resource Officer Michael Chase and his special presentation to kick off Kindness Week 2025! Many CTAE teachers worked with their students to offer a variety of community service projects, including campus cleanups, visits to elementary schools for lessons, collection drives, and more.

Auto Expo

The Annual Auto Expo was held on May 17, 2025. Cars filled the main parking lot, and ages ranged widely as the love for cars united them.

PTO Connection

There are two members of the administrative team who attend the monthly PTO meetings to increase the lines of communication.



District Improvement Goal

NightHawks Adult Education

Our NightHawks Adult Education enrollment and course development continued to increase in SY25. Courses included industry skills training and credentialing sessions in collaboration with MassHire and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, aligned with the Career Technical Institute (CTI) Initiative. All of these programs included Professional Skills, Career Readiness Skills, as well as multiple employer meet and greets, tours, and job placement opportunities. Additional NightHawks funding included GE Foundation and the Advanced Manufacturing Training and Expansion Program (AMTEP). We collaborated with the North Shore Community Action Program on our CNA program, which included career ladders for the students as they seek further opportunities. In the Summer of 2024, we successfully launched our first Offshore Wind/Renewable Energy Training Program.

We continued to offer courses for the licensed trades of Electrical through our Journeyman Program and Plumbing through our Tier Program. In addition to the workforce-based programs, we hosted community events, including Thanksgiving Centerpiece Creations and Holiday Cookie Decorating for Children in partnership with Rock the Spectrum.

The Larkin

We are pleased to share that the construction of the Larkin is officially complete. Our skilled students, staff, and community partners were instrumental in ensuring the completion of this project. We have completed the installation of all major systems and passed all necessary inspections, resulting in the issuance of our occupancy certificate. This project has been a great example of the power of career, technical, and agricultural education in action.

Professional Practice Goal

The District received budget approval from 13 communities as of June 18, 2025. It is anticipated that this number will increase as cities complete their budget process. [Budget Approval Log](#)

Please find a full list of all of the [competitive & entitlement grant funding](#) we received during Fiscal Year 2025. As a summary:

- Entitlement Grants \$1,217,411
- Competitive Grants \$5,779,417
- Private Funding \$1,656,694
- **Total Received** **\$8,653,522**
- *Total Pending* *\$1,385,000*



Other Updates

Human Resources (“HR”) Department

Since January, the HR Department has been working strategically to prepare for end-of-year activities, along with succession planning for the 25/26 school year. More specifically, since January, the HR Department has extended offers to and onboarded more than 15 new staff members. Recognizing retirements and resignations ahead, the Department has already filled numerous positions, including Bus Drivers, for the 25/26 school year.

Other notable accomplishments since January have included:

1. Solicited bids for and implemented a new vision insurance for all District staff, recognizing the rising cost of glasses, contacts, and optical care.
2. Ongoing HTF and AFSCME labor relations management. (Contract administration)
3. Performance management through corrective action and mentorship.
4. Maintaining single-digit vacancy rates.

The Department looks forward to working over the summer to update job descriptions, ensure vacant positions are filled, digitize personnel files, audit I-9 files, and work vigorously to ensure staff needs are addressed successfully.

Facilities, Farm, and Grounds Department

The Facilities, Farm, and Grounds Department had another busy school year as they worked tirelessly to maintain and enhance the campus for students, staff, and visitors. From supporting major construction projects to overseeing daily operations and seasonal upkeep, their efforts ensured a safe, clean, and welcoming environment across all areas of the school. A full summary of their accomplishments can be found in the formal [report linked here](#).

Technology Department

Since January, the Technology Department has begun, continued, and completed many projects to enhance district operations and teaching and learning. To increase caregiver knowledge of our district’s technology offerings, the department put together a [comprehensive guide](#) of our different technology platforms, including Aspen, Schoology, ParentSquare, Securly, and Smartpass. Ensuring our community is aware of all of our technology offerings ensures good utilization of our resources.

The department also took a significant step in ensuring the stability and performance of our district website. The website is the hub for our staff, students, families, and the greater community to access information and resources about our school and district. We switched our website hosting provider to a locally owned company that was a graduate of the district. Performance and reliability have greatly increased since making this switch.



Technology infrastructure across the campus also saw significant improvements. This includes completing the technology expansion of The Larkin, ensuring there is full access to technology resources such as WiFi, phones, printers, security cameras, presentation equipment, and audio equipment. Additionally, the department replaced and added several network drop locations throughout different areas of the campus where needed. The Manning Ave Parking Lot network expansion was also completed, providing internet, cameras, WiFi, and security infrastructure to this part of campus.

By our upgrade schedule, there were a number of regular device upgrades, including computer replacements for various staff and faculty members, printer replacements, and other miscellaneous equipment.

Finally, aligning with the district's mission of preparing the future workforce, the technology department continued its partnership with the Information Technology Services CTAE Program. This school year, we hosted two interns, a junior student and a senior student. Both students have signed on to continue their internships during the summer break. The intern program provides hands-on learning opportunities to these students and helps build the skills they will need to be successful in the workforce.

Safety and Security

Our Crisis Team met regularly to review safety practices and debrief after incidents. In addition, this team completed our Trusted Adult project to ensure that all students have a trusted adult at school.

Since January, we have added several security cameras around the campus as part of our ongoing focus on campus security & safety. We took a significant step forward in securing our campus' vehicle entry and exit points, installing additional license plate recognition cameras at the South East Gate near The Larkin, the North West Gate near the construction building, and at the Farmstand. The addition of these plate readers has helped the district identify potential safety threats proactively and significantly increase efficiency during investigations. We also began installing cameras in the stairwells of the high school; two stairwells have been completed. Outdated cameras were also replaced in the construction building, giving greater visibility in and around the building. Eight cameras were installed in and around the Larkin Center, bringing the total number of cameras up to 14 in and around that building.

Additionally, we installed key card access at two doors at Smith Hall. One addition has allowed our partner, CFCE, easy access to the building for their staff and visitors. The other addition has made entry to Smith Hall significantly more efficient from the North Campus and Gallant Hall, and has also increased accountability through enhanced logging of who enters the building and



when. The final milestone of the Manning Ave Parking Lot Gate project was reached with the installation of a key card reader at bus height and a door intercom and key card reader at passenger vehicle height. The addition of these readers provided a backup method for entering the parking lot in case there was a problem with a vehicle's license plate or the license plate reader.

Vape detectors were installed in the Construction Building and the Automotive/Manufacturing Building restrooms. We believe the installation of these detectors will help promote a healthier and safer environment for all students by discouraging the use of vaping devices on campus and allowing for timely interventions when necessary.

Union Negotiations

The District is currently negotiating a successor three-year collective bargaining agreement with AFSCME Local 245 General Unit that satisfies both parties' interests.

Looking Forward to 2025!

As we head into 2025, we will continue to focus on school culture, learning gaps for students, belonging, mental health, and expanding access to high-quality technical and agricultural education.

Conclusion

This report reflects key accomplishments and milestones since January 2025. Our progress is made possible by the dedication of our staff, the enthusiasm of our students, and the unwavering support of our families, all united by a shared commitment to academic and technical excellence. We remain confident that our graduates are well-prepared to enter high-demand industries with the skills needed to succeed.

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the School Committee, administrative team, faculty, staff, and the entire Essex North Shore community for their continued support in advancing our mission. Furthermore, “snow plows,” Shannon Donnelly, Joe Marino, Jill Sawyer, and Shelby Collins, who spend countless hours with me preparing this report. A special thank you to my husband, Chris Riccio, whose support allows me the privilege of serving this incredible school district.

Respectfully Submitted,

Heidi T. Riccio, Ed.D.
Superintendent-Director