



Superintendent-Director Mid-Cycle Report January 22, 2026

Introduction

This mid-cycle Report provides the Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School District Committee with a mid-year update on progress made within the context of our [5-Year Strategic Plan](#) and the Superintendent [SMARTIE Goals](#) approved by the Committee in November 2025. It was drafted by our senior leadership team and demonstrates the work of the entire District.

Staff received their annual branded t-shirts with our norms, Be Prepared. Be Present. Participate is printed on them. When our students returned to school, we continued with our cell phone policies. Students put their phones in cell phone caddies or lock boxes in classrooms and CTAE areas. This is working well and helping students remain on task.

We recognize that many communities are facing budgetary challenges. This presents a challenge for our District as we receive funding from our communities. With federal and state funding drastically decreasing, we continue to seek alternative funding sources and have begun to engage with foundations. We have asked our staff to seek donations from PAC members and organizations to cut costs.

Personal Growth and Development Statement

I am committed to personal growth and development. In 2026, I will continue to sit on many local and state boards focusing on workforce development, equity, belonging, and education. I was asked to sit on the Scouting America Executive Board, which builds character, leadership, and ethical choices in our youth.

Throughout the year, I participate in various professional learning opportunities, including the LEADS Network Summit at Suffolk University and a Day of Learning at the Boston Reserve in January. As an Associate Visiting Professor at Fitchburg State University, I am able to stay current in educational trends while helping to develop new vocational teachers. It is rewarding to see our future educators back in the classroom and developing their own skills.

This report will focus on the work we have done and accomplished since July 2025. I am fortunate to have a team that brings unique skillsets to the District and truly makes it a pleasure to come onto campus every day.

Teaching and Learning

This 2025 school year kicked off in July with the Leadership Retreat. We held it at the Larkin to showcase the beautiful work of our building trades. Nearly 50 staff members attended for two days, and the last day was held off-site with the leadership team. The norms remained a theme as we focused on being prepared, present, and participating. [The Dignity Index](#) was introduced, and



the purpose is to collaborate across the organization through respect and dignity.

Quarterly common benchmark assessments have been implemented in all academic and CTAE courses. These benchmark assessments will allow teachers and administrators to monitor student progress, identify learning gaps, adjust instruction, and ensure curriculum alignment.

Our revised Competency Determination requirements have been submitted to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The requirements include passing ELA and Math, courses in grades 9 and 10, as well as US History and one lab-science course in grades 9, 10, or 11. In addition, students must pass all quarterly benchmark assessments in these courses. Students who do not pass the assessments will be enrolled in a credit recovery program at ENSATS. If students do not pass a quarterly benchmark assessment, they will meet with their teacher for additional instruction and then retake the assessment until they reach a passing score.

We continue to offer the [Skillful Teacher](#) course for new teachers within their first three years through Research for Better Teaching. In August, the Teacher Academy and New Teacher Orientation support our educators in their first three years of employment. Our commitment to our new faculty has not wavered, and a new induction coach was hired with specific experience in ELA, ML population, and CTAE staff members.

To date, our District is committed to safe work practices in the CTAE programs and Science labs. OSHA Construction and General Industry was held in January and February, respectively. This is a prerequisite for the train-the-trainer course, and staff have the option to receive undergraduate and graduate credit offered through tuition reimbursement.

Our Multilingual Learner (ML) enrollment is 42 students, which is 6 more students than last year. Our Former ML enrollment is also 42, which represents a 13-student increase from last year. To support our growing multilingual learner population, we hired two additional staff members. One staff member is supporting students during their CTAE week.

We partnered with Triton High School to secure Title III funding. These funds will support the purchase of a new ML curriculum and professional development for both our ML department staff and SEI-endorsed teaching staff.

Through a grant, four staff members completed training with Activating Language Access and were certified as Tier 2 Education Interpreters. These staff members have supported colleagues by assisting with effective communication with families.

We will participate in the MA State Seal of Biliteracy for the third consecutive year. The Seal is awarded upon graduation to seniors who successfully demonstrate proficiency in English and at least one additional language. The Seal of Biliteracy is formally documented on student



transcripts and may allow students to earn college credit. It is also a recognized credential that can support future employment opportunities. These students support new students throughout engagement activities.

Currently, forty-nine students in grades 11 and 12 have registered to participate in language proficiency assessments to qualify for the Seal. Ten languages are represented, ranging from Albanian to Urdu, reflecting the cultural diversity of our students.

Many of our Health Assisting students have signed up to participate in this opportunity. Some healthcare providers offer differential pay incentives for multilingual employees, making biliteracy a valuable workforce credential. This year, we will also offer the STAMP Spanish Medical Assessment to these students. This assessment allows students to demonstrate Spanish language proficiency specific to healthcare terminology and professional settings.

There are two hundred eleven students enrolled in our Early College Program classes offered through North Shore Community College. This year, two new asynchronous courses were added to the Grade 12 Early College offerings, and the program also held its first-ever summer course.

Peer mediators also participated in summer training with the Resolution Center and have facilitated several mediations this fall.

The professional learning offerings in the first half of the year included several workshops presented by our teachers for their peers. We harnessed the amazing work happening in our classrooms and provided time to share best practices. Several workshops were held to share classroom strategies for implementing Michael McDowell's Deeper Learning techniques. Our full-day professional development included McDowell strategies, other classroom best practices, technology training, and some fun activities. A small cohort of teachers and administrators also attended additional PD sessions with McDowell, offered by ECLC. Our upcoming professional development will focus on data review of our Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 benchmark assessments. Several staff and administrators have participated in Massachusetts Partnership for Youth offerings, including sessions on legal alerts, attendance, special education, and school avoidance. We have rebooted our PLCs this year. HTF staff were assigned to a PLC group that meets monthly; these PLCs include Professional Development planning, Culture Action Team, New Teachers, Freshmen Exploratory Teachers, Portfolio Redesign, and MyCAP, among others.

Student Support Services

The 2025-2026 school year has brought numerous opportunities for continued growth and development within the Special Education Department.

In August 2025, Essex Tech welcomed 120 freshmen (an increase of 11 9th-grade students from



August 2024) who are identified as Students with Disabilities (SWD) and require special education services through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). These students represent a wide range of disability categories, and we continue to provide access to Career and Technical Agricultural Education (CTAE) programs to a more diverse group of students.

Our current Student with Disabilities enrollment is 401 students, 21% (20.6%) of our student population, which closely aligns with the state average (20.0%).

In support of student learning, we have continued to establish systems and structures within the Academic Support block. We moved our Pilot of the Academic Support Plan to full implementation with great success. This implementation includes clear criteria for service eligibility and a plan for monitoring progress and meeting student goals.

[Draft Academic Support Criteria](#)
[Academic Support Plan](#)

A significant milestone this fall was the successful implementation of the new timeline regulations for IEP meetings and development. We have successfully met 100% of the timeline requirements. The NEW IEP Project continues with the development and full implementation of the [NEW IEP Alignment Guide](#). Staff participated in the development of this Alignment Guide with Mertens Educational Consulting. A special recognition to the following staff: Vince DiGilio, Kathryn LaChance, Stacy Lucido, Lisa Roberts, Tina Vlad, Chris Nisco, and Kasey Fowler for their work on this project. Additionally, a PLC (Professional Learning Community) is taking place with staff to explore the guide. The goals for this PLC are:

- ☐ *Collaborate more effectively with colleagues by aligning terminology, expectations, and frameworks.*
- ☐ *Anchor IEP decisions in current research and instructional evidence.*
- ☐ *Build meaningful, measurable goals that address academic and functional needs.*
- ☐ *Select accommodations and modifications that clearly support access to general education content and skills.*
- ☐ *Write IEPs that are both data-driven and student-centered.*

The Office of Public School Monitoring, which spent time on Campus in February 2025, completed the ENSATS Group A Integrated Monitoring Review, and it was finalized this fall. The [IMR School Committee Presentation](#) was shared at the School Committee meeting this fall.

Our current project focuses on developing a Special Education Procedural Manual, currently in DRAFT form. This is a requirement for every district in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. During department meetings, we will work to explore and navigate this Manual to develop a better understanding of the Special Educator's role in meeting DESE requirements as they relate



to Special Education regulations.

Several mental health initiatives have been implemented or are planned this year. Some of these initiatives include our new partnership with [Care Solace](#), a nationally recognized provider that affords families and students access to community-based mental health care, substance use, and social services providers, including Medicaid agencies, individual therapy practices, and telehealth options. Care Solace has already proven to be a valuable resource, as School Counselors & Wellness Instructors recently completed our Grade 11 [Signs of Suicide \(SOS\) for Students](#). Mental Health Screens with students (see: [Care Solace Usage Report](#)). Our [NAN Project](#) Grade 12 Peer-to-Peer Suicide Prevention Presentations and Screens began on January 29 and will conclude in early March, while our annual Grade 9 Break Free From Depression Screenings will begin in late March. Our entire staff is completing the MindWise [SOS for School Staff](#) training for the second year to support this work as well. In addition, our Student [DirTY Hands Project](#) Chapter is in its second year. Together with the Athletic Department, our Football and Hockey teams have engaged in Mental Health Awareness initiatives over the last two school years, most recently with the boys and girls hockey teams partnering with the [Connors Climb Foundation](#) and Maritime Health. Our collaboration with [NAGLY](#) (the North Shore Alliance of GLBTQ+ Youth) has expanded this year, as well as a team of staff, including CTAE and academic faculty, special educators, and the Director of School Counselors, who have engaged in a professional learning community to increase awareness and support for all members of our GLBTQIA+ community. As a result, our faculty and clerical staff participated in a professional learning session led by NAGLY Director, Tony Leone, during our January Professional Development session. Mr. Leone is also consulting with our GSA Advisor and has now also met with our student GSA club. Additionally, with funding support from ENSATS's SY26 Hate Crimes Grant, members of the PLC are participating in MPY's "Inclusive Classroom" series, and two faculty members are now our NAGLY Educator Liaisons, participating in monthly educator forums with local NAGLY school members.

Family and Community Engagement:

We continue to engage families and our community through social media platforms. I am happy to report that we have seen a significant increase in engagement and use that positively promotes our school and all that happens at Essex Tech. The report can be found [HERE](#). We continue to use ParentSquare for family communications. This platform allows families to choose the language for translation.

In September, we honored those who died on 9/11/2001 by placing over 2K American flags on the front lawn. Students participated in curriculum activities in their classes so that we never forget those lost and those who were willing to lose their lives to save others.

There were several events held that welcomed families and the community onto campus. Some



of them include Back to School Night, Open House, College and Career Fair, and the Program Advisory Committee meeting.

The Family Engagement Team celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month by welcoming parents to join the Latino Student Organization and participate in a Bachata Class led by our dance instructor, Ms. Cocco. We will continue this work with activities planned in the spring.

In November, we held our annual Homecoming Dance, with over 1000 students attending. Once again, our agricultural students worked to promote Essex Tech and the importance of agricultural education at the Topsfield Fair. The Guidance Department had its largest showing of colleges at our annual College Fair. We held our 11th annual Hawk Holiday Hope community service learning project, culminating in two school assemblies on December 12th to celebrate our whole-school holiday giving. Through this amazing project, we purchased gifts for over 100 North Shore children in need who are in Department of Children and Families (DCF) custody or receiving DCF services. This is possible through the dedicated efforts of our staff and students and many additional donations from families, the Essex North Shore PTO, the Essex North Shore School Committee, and several local businesses.

We have had record applications this year for the Class of 2030. The District School Committee adopted a revised Admissions Policy for SY25-26 aligned to new regulations set forth by MA DESE in May, 2025. Additionally, the District School Committee adopted an Admissions Allocation Procedure for SY25-26 specific to a process for accepting Member district applicants. All our recruitment and outreach materials, including our Open House documents and the admissions information on our website, are consistently available to families in at least three home languages: English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

[Cooperative Education Report](#) [Cooperative Education Employers](#)

Our Cooperative Education Counselors are preparing Grade 11 students who are eligible to begin cooperative education in early February. On January 15, we hosted a CTAE Career Fair for 11th graders, where local businesses connected with students and offered job opportunities for students looking for cooperative education employment. Currently, 53% (428 students) of 12th graders are participating in the cooperative education program, an increase from 38% in January 2025. Grade 11 students are preparing for cooperative education placement, with 32 currently placed.

We continue to strengthen community partnerships through a wide range of collaborative initiatives involving multiple CTAE programs. Students engaged with local organizations by applying their technical skills in authentic, real-world settings while supporting community



needs. Partnerships included collaboration with the North Shore Children's Museum, where Carpentry students assisted with the installation of exhibits, and CTAE programs participated in CTE Month (February) by creating and delivering interactive, career-focused lessons for preschool-aged children. Health Assisting tenth-grade students presented age-appropriate health science lessons to elementary students at Peabody Public Schools – South School, further extending outreach to younger learners. Several programs partnered with community organizations to support special populations and charitable causes. Sustainable Horticulture collaborated with Northeast Arc to deliver a holiday-themed flower arrangement class for clients at the Liberty Tree Mall location. Culinary Arts provided a holiday meal for residents of the River House Women's Shelter and participated alongside Natural and Environmental Science at Senator Tarr's Crammit Summit. Additionally, Cosmetology students supported Runway for Recovery through a fundraising event benefiting breast cancer awareness. Cross-program collaboration was demonstrated through the Dirty Hands Project, where students from Engineering, Carpentry, and Advanced Manufacturing worked together to design coasters and other branded items for a community fundraiser. Students also participated in multiple off-campus construction and restoration projects, including electrical and carpentry work at the Beverly Little League (Essex Street Field), plumbing, HVAC, electrical, and carpentry work at the Stramski House in Marblehead, and landscape restoration at Middleton Field. Future community-based projects are planned at the Beverly Airport and the Beverly Walkway Bridge.

The school continues to offer a variety of events designed to support student engagement and strengthen connections with the community. These include the New Caregiver Orientation, Meet the Teacher Night, Program Advisory Committee meeting, the Credit for Life Fair, and the Annual Open House for prospective students. In addition, the NightHawks Program has expanded its community offerings by introducing new hobby-based classes, including floral arrangement, wreath decorating, and hobby welding.

Staffing

The District has been working diligently to increase our staff diversity. This school year, we hired two multilingual staff members, bringing the total to 23 who can communicate in a second language. Our postings specifically state that we prefer multilingual staff to support our growing population of families where English is their second language.

Our AFSCME population increased with the hiring of additional security officers, grounds crew, farm crew, and maintenance staff. This has allowed the District to operate at higher levels.

The District hired a Safety Compliance Officer who works with the Director of FF&G and the



Executive Director of Workforce Development and CTAE to ensure safety protocols are practiced consistently.

Facilities, Farm & Grounds

Since July, we have kept the FFG active with numerous projects on campus. Through a Cummings Foundation and an MassHire summer jobs program grant, we were able to hire students in our building trades to work alongside their teachers and complete several campus projects. Below is a list of completed projects to date.

Gallant Hall

Completed the Geothermal Heating and Cooling System with increased efficiency and improved indoor air quality. Completed the design and bidding process for the building addition and recently celebrated the kick-off of both the construction project and utility relocation project.

The Larkin

The Larkin Addition Project is underway, which will provide an opportunity for the next class of students to be part of a memorable project. CCL has been working hard throughout the winter weather to complete the first phase of the footings, foundation, and waterproofing. Carpentry, Plumbing, and Electrical are studying the plans and ordering their materials to begin their portion of the project.

Cafeteria Addition Project

Construction of the cafe addition is underway and on track for completion before spring, providing seating for an additional 100 students. It has a completion date of March, 2026.

Bridge/Tunnel

We were able to update the traffic study, design, and cost estimate on the bridge tunnel project. With the backing of Senators Bruce Tarr and Joan Lovely and the help of student representatives, we advocated to the Senate Transportation Committee to pass [S.2414](#), a bill to fund the construction of a tunnel to connect our North and South campuses. This would provide a safe, accessible way for our students, staff, and community to cross our campus.

Energy Efficient Projects

Along with the completion of the sustainable HVAC systems in Alumni Gym and Gallant Hall, we have also completed multiple LED retrofit projects, including the Metal Fabrication and Animal Science buildings. Additional lighting projects will begin shortly in other areas of the campus.

Safety and Security

Invested in a culture of safety and security by increasing the number of security guards on



campus and hiring a Safety Compliance officer. We now have (6) full-time security guards who protect the campus from 7 am to 11 pm. Our new Safety Compliance officer will help us take a proactive and preventative approach to safety. This position will help maintain safety consistency across all of our programs during the day and in the evening. We have also increased the lighting and walkways to provide a safe walkway from Smith Hall to the Larkin Cottage and from the Main Campus to the Essex Sports Center

Farm and Grounds

The District hired a new Farm manager and three new groundskeepers to help with the farm and campus's ongoing maintenance and improvements. On the farm, we have increased egg production by investing in a new chicken coop that allows us to expand our flock. The completion of a Wash Pack and Cold storage buildings to support increased production in our hydroponic greenhouse was recently completed. The grounds crew installed bushes to line the baseball dugout, which creates a barrier from the abutter. We are happy to report that we have reached our all-time yield, producing over 4000 pounds of produce. We have also continued our existing beef meat share program and have expanded to sheep, while planning to process some of our chickens. The grounds crew is now under the direct supervision of the Director of Facilities. This allows Director Monks to deploy staff where needed.

Overall Facility Maintenance

This summer we were able to complete numerous office renovation projects including the following: Academy A, B, D, E flooring and painting project, Workforce Development Office and Superintendent office expansion with bathroom renovation, Executive Director office renovation, a new AP Suite on the second floor for increased visibility in high traffic areas, airwall installation to create four classroom spaces, several water heaters, the relocation of the water heater, emergency electrical circuitry, parameter drainage and a HVAC infrastructure at the Larkin to prepare for addition, two new storage closets, and more.

Fiscal Responsibility

The District has seen a significant reduction in competitive grant opportunities, a direct result of the loss of federal and state ESSER funding. However, we have received an increase of approximately \$100K in our out-of-district special education revenue and private donations. The District will continue to build relationships with private foundations to increase the opportunities presented to us. As of January 19, 2026, the District has a new non-profit foundation, the [Essex Tech Education Foundation \(ETEF\)](#).

Our Leadership Team is reviewing the budget documents to identify potential cost savings. I present a budget update and leave time for questions at each faculty meeting. I have also informed staff that they may meet with me at any time to discuss budget concerns. We will collaborate by receiving recommendations for efficiencies from all staff.



Please find a full list of grant funding received as of February 18, 2026.

Entitlement Grant Name	Grant Amount	Start Date:	Grant End Date:
Safe & Supportive Schools	\$10,000	9/4/2025	6/30/2026
Title II	\$36,780.00	8/20/2025	9/30/2027
Title I	\$221,559.00	8/20/2025	9/30/2027
Title IV	\$13,081.00	8/20/2025	9/30/2027
Title III (Triton is the lead fiscal)	\$5,808.00	11/3/2025	6/30/2026
Perkins	\$383,067.00	8/18/2025	6/30/2026
IDEA	\$502,688.00	8/19/2025	9/30/2027
Total	\$1,172,983.00		
Competitive Grant Name	Grant Amount	Start Date:	Grant End Date:
Perkins Program Improvement and Equipment Grant	\$25,000.00	7/15/2025	9/30/2025
MyCAP Planning & Implementation Grant	\$7,000.00	10/20/2025	6/30/2026
FirstJobs	\$18,261.00	7/7/2025	8/31/2025
CTE Partnership	\$38,455.00	9/9/2025	6/30/2025
CTI Round 9 - Core Services (increase to original Rnd 9 budget)	\$345,600.00	12/12/2024	12/31/2026
Early College	\$80,000.00	8/6/2025	6/30/2026
Lewis Bulgarris Land Sale	\$341,201.64	7/29/2025	N/A
Lewis Bulgarris Land Sale - additional proceeds	\$2,195.00	10/02/2025	N/A
Hate Crimes Prevention	\$11,500.00	8/19/2025	6/30/2026
MassCEC/NSCC - HVAC Training Grant	\$268,293.14	10/16/2025	12/31/2026



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Technology Department

During the 2025–2026 school year, the Technology Department supported a wide range of instructional, operational, and infrastructure initiatives across the district while maintaining a strong focus on service, security, and reliability.



Over the summer, the department was supported by four student interns—graduate Akram, rising seniors Hunter and Roisey, and rising junior Michael—who assisted with device preparation, deployments, and campus projects. The team completed large-scale device work, including reimaging laptops for the CTAE program and preparing Chromebooks and accounts for new students. New staff onboarding was also a major focus, with the creation of multiple accounts per employee, device provisioning, and system access configuration. A new student email domain was successfully implemented as part of broader account management improvements.

The Technology Department supported several building and infrastructure projects, including the renovation of the AP Suite, fiber relocation for Gallant Hall, fiber replacement for the H-Lot, D-Lot, and Greenhouse, and UPS battery replacements in the main MDF. Additional campus improvements included audiovisual upgrades in the Alumni building.

Throughout the year, the department supported the implementation and ongoing use of several new software platforms, including LinkIT, EduPlanet, JobReady, GuardsPro, MagicSchool AI, August Schools, Jamf Protect, ParentSquare Pay for invoicing, and the district's transition to Zoom Fax. The team also reworked email group configurations to improve clarity and usability, developed an Adult Education webpage, supported HR with FOIA requests, and ensured that 100% of student files included photos. A new athletic coach onboarding procedure was established, and the department began implementing a software solution to improve efficiency in the Health Office and School Counseling Department, including visit tracking, paperwork, and communication.

Service and responsiveness remained a priority. Between July 1 and December 31, the Technology Department received 1956 support tickets, with 1903 resolved to date. Of those tickets, 34% were resolved within one hour and 34% within 24 hours, reflecting timely and effective support.

Cybersecurity remains a core focus. The department implemented Abnormal AI email protection to strengthen defenses against phishing and email-based threats.

Safety and Security

Safety and Security are always paramount in education. To promote and further enhance safety and security, the District has:

- Increase in Security personnel to include one parking lot driver
- Hiring a Safety Compliance Officer
- New camera installations in Upper C
- New intercom installation in the main building
- Reissued over 300 key cards and fobs



- Installed vape detectors in six bathrooms, including Smith Hall, Gallant Hall, and the Animal Science building.

Before the school year started, we met with the Danvers Chief of Police and the Fire Chief to discuss the school's safety operations. We also conducted an Enhanced Lockdown training and drill with the aid of School Resource Officer Chase and the Danvers Police Department. The school crisis team meets biweekly to debrief events, plan future training and drills, and review safety protocols and practices. We meet monthly with the Police Chief and Director of Community Policing, Sergeant Smith, to review concerns we have.

Union Relations

The District is currently negotiating a contract with HTF and hopes to complete this process before the close of school in June.

A group of administrators and HTF leaders continues to meet monthly as a Labor Collaboration Team. The purpose of the meeting is to foster collaboration and keep the lines of communication open. In addition, a small group of HTF staff meets monthly with the Assistant Principals to review teachers' concerns, determine solutions, and report back to the faculty.

The District holds collaboration meetings with both AFSCME units monthly to keep the lines of communication open.

Conclusion

I am deeply proud of the collective work we have accomplished. Our progress is the result of shared commitment and collaboration; none of this happens in isolation. While we are aware of the financial challenges that lie ahead, I am committed to working alongside our entire school community to identify efficiencies as we move into the second half of the 2026 school year.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the District School Committee for your trust and support. Your leadership has enabled us to grow thoughtfully and innovate in ways that best prepare our students for the future workforce. I am equally grateful to our students, families, faculty, staff, and workforce partners. Their dedication to delivering outstanding career, technical, and agricultural education every day is truly commendable. This work is sustained by many hands and hearts, not by a few. Lastly, to the leadership team who works hard to keep our school safe, clean, and a great environment to learn. I am thankful for the opportunity to continue leading this remarkable school and appreciate the continued support of the District Committee as we move forward together.



Respectfully Submitted,

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

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