



Superintendent-Director End of Year Report June 11, 2026

Introduction

This End of Year Report provides the Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School District Committee with an update on progress made since the [Mid-Year Report](#) in January and related to 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. The report is comprehensive but not exhaustive.

At the time of this report, the District has [budget approval](#) from 13 of the 17 communities. The town of Topsfield is seeking a special town meeting for a portion of our budget, and the cities of Beverly, Gloucester, Peabody, and Salem have not held their budget approval meetings at the time of this document.

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. Donations have been documented, so appropriate appreciation is sent. The District has been working with the Essex Tech Education Foundation (ETEF) closely to seek funding from private donors. At this time, the District received a \$200K donation for unrestricted use. This is a new partnership, and we look forward to deepening the relationship.

Personal Growth and Development Statement

I plan to continue to sit on regional and state boards where networks are strengthened and partnerships are formed. This year, I participated in several meetings across the Commonwealth that have benefited our school, including the Chamber of Commerce, MassHire Board, and SkillsUSA Board meetings, to name a few.

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 (FSU), 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.

In March, I was appointed to a stipend position with FSU as the Associate Chairperson of the Occupational Education department. This appointment will help give us information related to teacher licensure and coursework. In May, I was selected to help develop a programmatic curriculum for Northern Essex Community College. This new offering allows new teachers to receive licensure credit at no cost when they enroll in two or more courses.

This report will focus on the work we have done and accomplished since January 2026. Please



review my [Mid-Cycle Review](#) for the work completed prior to January 2026. 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

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

Our revised Competency Determination requirements were submitted to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in January. The requirements include passing ELA and Math, courses in grades 9 and 10, and 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 are pleased to report that RBT Skillful Teacher selected Essex North Shore to film new CTAE instructors while teaching their Grade 10 students. The videos were reviewed with Jon Saphier, one of the founders of the Skillful Teacher and a world-renowned educational expert. This work will continue and be used by RBT in courses offered.

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. To date, 24 CTAE instructors have earned their OSHA trainer certification. In addition, students across all CTAE programs earn OSHA 10-Hour and CPR certifications. Students also have the opportunity to earn industry-recognized, program-specific credentials that enhance their skills and prepare them for future employment opportunities.

Students in the Health Assisting, Dental Assisting, and Veterinary Assisting programs earned a pin by passing a rigorous assessment that gives them a valuable workplace certification.

CTAE Credentials

We have purchased the National Geographic ELE curriculum, which will be used for all English Language Development classes beginning in the fall of 2026. Teachers in the ELE Department attended professional development to collaborate on strategies to implement this new curriculum.



We participated in the MA State Seal of Biliteracy for the third consecutive year. There were 18 students in the class of 2026 who graduated with this recognition in 5 languages. An additional 2 students graduated with the MA State Seal of Biliteracy with Distinction. The Seal is awarded to students upon graduation 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.

This winter, 32 students in the class of 2027 sat for the language proficiency exam. Ten languages were represented, ranging from Albanian to Urdu, reflecting the cultural diversity of our students. Currently, 16 students in the class of 2027 have met the criteria to graduate with this award. Many of the other students partially met the criteria, so they will continue to practice their language skills to retake the sections they need next year.

Most recently, sophomore students in our Advanced Spanish III class took the language assessment, and 17 demonstrated proficiency in Spanish to qualify for the award. Several students will need to retake only one section of the assessment to meet the second language qualification next fall.

There are 211 students enrolled in our Early College Program classes offered through North Shore Community College. The graduating Class of 2026 earned 1,242 college credits through the Early College Program. We continue to receive state funding to expand courses, and the program is growing in popularity.

The professional learning offerings in the second half of the year focused on reviewing data from our 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. All HTF staff were assigned to a PLC group that met monthly; these PLCs include Professional Development planning, Culture Action Team, New Teachers, Freshmen Exploratory Teachers, Portfolio Redesign, and MyCAP, among others.

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

In the Spring of 2026, Essex Tech accepted 176 freshmen (an increase of 56 9th-grade students from August 2025) 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 398 students, 21% (20.8%) of our student population, which is consistent with the start of the school year and closely aligns with the state average (20.0%). Our **anticipated** Student with Disabilities enrollment is 496 students, 25% of our



student population, which is an increase of 4%.

Our Educators worked in PLC's to align IEPs using the [NEW IEP Alignment Guide](#). This opportunity enabled the Professional Development conducted in the Spring of 2025 by a small development group to expand the work across the department and beyond. Some of the work in the PLC included:

"We are working on developing a standardized template to guide how data is incorporated into IEPs, with particular focus on the PLAAFP sections. The goal is to make the connection between assessment results and classroom performance clearer for readers. We also discussed separating testing data into the appropriate individual PLAAFPs and ensuring consistency in formatting and organization across all IEPs."

"Spent the morning examining student IEP goals. We are looking for ways to create data-driven goals with fewer benchmarks and more accessible progress monitoring, such as embedded teacher rubrics aligned with state standards. Also discussed that some of the IEP goals are written to address skills that are not always addressed in the general education setting, so how do we either write goals that align with the curriculum, address broader academic skills, or give second teachers the time and ability to assess non-related skills? For example, shifting math fluency goals toward problem-solving skills, since students have access to calculators. "

The [Special Education Procedural Manual](#) has moved from DRAFT to FINAL 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.

What is next for the Special Education Department? Using what was learned in Professional Development for Administrators with Michael McDowell, communication with the department was outlined through a ["I do, You do, We do"](#) lens. We will focus on developing, as a team, a three-year strategic plan to guide our work, in co-teaching and modifications for course contents, and the third priority area is yet to be determined, as we will do that as a team.

Family and Community Engagement:

We continue to engage families and our community through social media, where we have seen continued growth in both reach and engagement. These platforms help us share student achievements, school news, and the many opportunities available at Essex Tech. Highlights from our January-May 2026 social media report include:

- 18,500 followers across Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn
- More than 4.9 million impressions across all social media platforms
- More than 243,000 engagements, including reactions, comments, shares, and clicks
- 4,159 Facebook post link clicks, helping connect families and community members with important school information



- A 6.4% Facebook engagement rate, reflecting strong audience interaction with Essex Tech content

Our updated Social Media Report can be found [here](#). In collaboration with Allerton Hill Communications, we also developed an admissions video to support student recruitment and showcase the Essex Tech experience. We continue to use ParentSquare for family communications, which provides translation options and helps ensure information is accessible to all families.

Community service is important to us, and our students rose to the occasion, with our graduating class clocking 22,191 hours of community service. We also held opportunities for students, including a Campus Cleanup Day and the dedication of Ty's Trail, capping off the DirTY Hands Project month-long Hike for a Change on Ty's Trail and concluding at a beautiful new mural that focuses on friendship by local artist Anna Dugan.

Our Cooperative Education Counselors worked diligently during the second half of the school year to expand student participation in cooperative education placements. As a result, 41% of 11th-grade students (429 students) are currently participating in the cooperative education program. Additionally, the Class of 2026 graduated with more than half of its students having participated in a cooperative education experience. On May 8th, we hosted our annual SkillsUSA Signing Day, an event that recognizes and celebrates students who have committed to entering the workforce directly after graduation.

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

Throughout the second half of the school year, students across our CTAE programs actively engaged in community learning opportunities, strengthening partnerships with local organizations while providing valuable services and applying industry-specific skills in practical learning environments. Health Assisting students engaged with elementary students at Welch and Carroll Schools, participated in activities with residents at Hathorne Hill, cleaned the Rail Trail, assisted with field day at Carroll Elementary, and collaborated with Equine Science for horse therapy training. Early Childhood students supported after-school programs and will assist with Carroll Elementary's field day. Cosmetology students provided personal care demonstrations at Girls Inc. in Lynn. Auto students organized a community-focused car show, while Culinary students contributed to multiple community events, including a green eggs and ham breakfast for children's literacy, a comedy show fundraiser at Larkin, a veterans lunch, affordable meals for YMCA residents, the Alternate Prom in Beverly, catering for Boy Scouts at the Topsfield Fair, a food truck for the Auto Show, the Dirty Hands Project cookout, and strawberry shortcake preparation at the Topsfield Strawberry Festival. Dental students



participated in the North Shore Mall Playgroup Event and visited St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary and Preschool. Arboriculture, Carpentry, Engineering, and Landscape students collaborated on the Dirty Hands Project, Ty's Trail dedication, mural projects, town landscaping, and rail trail maintenance. Metal Fabrication students built custom training wall stands for the Peabody Police Department, while Engineering and Carpentry students created the Middleton Town Seal signage and podium. Design and Media Communications students supported high school graduation programs and dedicated the new scoreboard sign to John Lynch. Sustainable Horticulture students contributed to municipal flower arrangements, graduation and prom florals, community food donations, and local events, including the Topsfield Fair and Spring Plant Sale. Large and Companion Animal Science students participated in meat sales, farm bureau tours, cattle shows, and community grooming projects. Carpentry, Electrical, HVAC, and Plumbing students contributed to a wide range of community construction and maintenance projects across local schools, town halls, recreational fields, the Stramski House, and Habitat for Humanity houses. Collectively, these initiatives highlight the dedication of our CTAE students to leveraging their skills for the benefit of the community, fostering connections that extend learning beyond the classroom.

SkillsUSA National Signing Day

In May, we celebrated several students who will enter the workforce full-time upon graduation. This event was sponsored by Urture Outdoor Wear, which donated over \$4,000 of apparel specifically designed for the students. Bill Butts, Chairperson of the Landscaping & Turf Management PAC, was the keynote speaker.

Workforce Development

The NightHawks had a successful year, providing training opportunities to more than 400 adult learners through Plumbing and Electrical Continuing Education courses, as well as CTI grant-funded tuition-free training programs in the following career areas: Advanced Manufacturing, Electro-Mechanical Assembly, Welding, Auto Technology, Biotechnology, Carpentry, Construction Craft Laborers, Electrical, HVAC, and Plumbing. In addition to classroom instruction, the training focused on workforce readiness by connecting participants with employment opportunities through job fairs, company tours, community construction projects, and guest speakers from industry partners. Efforts continued to secure grant funding to expand future training opportunities and to strengthen partnerships with local businesses to develop courses that meet workforce needs. The program also increased community enrichment offerings by introducing a hobby welding class, wreath decorating & floral arrangements, with plans to add culinary arts/baking, sewing, and candle-making classes in the coming year to further engage community members and support lifelong learning.

Staffing



The District has been working diligently to increase staff diversity. During this school year, we hired two multilingual staff members, bringing the total number of employees who can communicate in a second language to 23. Our job postings specifically state a preference for multilingual candidates to better support our growing population of families for whom English is a second language.

Our AFSCME workforce also expanded with the addition of security officers, grounds crew members, farm crew members, and maintenance staff. These hires have strengthened District operations and enhanced our ability to serve students and families effectively.

The District has already filled several key positions for the 2026–2027 school year and continues to recruit highly qualified staff members to meet the evolving needs of the District.

Facilities, Farm & Grounds

We continue to make significant investments across our campus, including our facilities, farm, and grounds. This year, we expanded our agricultural program by adding 10 sheep, two calves, 40 broiler chickens, and 16 newly hatched laying hens. We have also increased our egg production capacity and completed our spring meat share programs.

Our Facilities team had a particularly demanding winter, managing record snowfall without any serious injuries, the need for outside contractors, or extended school closures. We also collaborated with our neighbors and the Town of Danvers to provide mutual aid, ensuring that sidewalks surrounding the campus remained clear and safe for travel. In addition, our Safety and Security teams have continued to make significant progress in fostering a strong culture of safety across campus.

Gallant Hall

Construction of the two-story addition to Gallant Hall is progressing well and will continue throughout the summer. The foundation has been completed, and the structural steel is now in place. Roofing and exterior enclosure work will begin shortly.

Plans are also being finalized for two tennis courts to be constructed above the geothermal well field. We anticipate beginning this phase of the project during the summer months.

The Larkin

The Larkin project has reached the stage where framing can begin. Underground plumbing and electrical work have been completed, and the final concrete pours for the floor and accessibility ramp are now finished. Additional construction work will take place this summer with support from students and staff.

Cafeteria Addition Project

The cafeteria addition is substantially complete, with only a few minor punch-list items remaining. The CCL program is currently completing the fieldstone work around the patio area in collaboration with Landscaping and Turf Management students, who will begin work on the



patio itself shortly.

The addition will officially open when students return in the fall.

Route 62 Safety Improvements

The district was awarded funding through House Bill H5470 to support safety improvements along Route 62. Planned enhancements will focus on crosswalks, lighting, and sidewalks to improve pedestrian safety in and around the campus.

Initial conversations have begun with the Town of Danvers and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation to develop a design and implementation plan for the project.

Farm & Grounds

On the farm, we have continued to sustainably increase both our chicken flock and egg production by incubating and hatching eggs produced by our existing flock. We are proud to report a record harvest of more than 6,000 pounds of produce this year.

In addition, we completed two beef meat share programs and launched our first chicken meat share program, through which we raised, processed, and sold more than 30 chickens.

Overall Facility Maintenance

Throughout the school year, the Facilities team completed numerous projects and repairs across campus. We completed energy-efficient lighting upgrades in the Bus Garage, Animal Science Building, and Smith Hall, improving both sustainability and operational efficiency. New flooring that matches the remaining areas of Smith Hall was completed in the Superintendent-Directors' office, and new lighting was installed in the main entrance of Smith Hall.

The District completed the replacement of a transformer on Manning Street, which saved thousands of dollars.

Fiscal Responsibility

The District continues to see significant reductions in competitive grant opportunities. We work diligently to find alternative funding sources that can offset budget deficits and continue our goal of increasing access. The District continues to build relationships with private foundations to increase the opportunities presented to us. For example, we recently received \$200K in funding through a private foundation to be spent on campus improvements and/or educational needs. These funds will be sent directly to the [Essex Tech Education Foundation \(ETEF\)](#), and the board will vote on the use of the funds as needed.

Our team continues to review departmental budgets for efficiency. Grant funding will be sought as they become available.



Please find a full list of grant funding received as of June 10, 2026.

GRANT FUNDING

Technology Department

Building on the initiatives outlined in the mid-cycle report, the Technology Department continued to support instructional, operational, and infrastructure needs across the district during the second half of the 2025–2026 school year while maintaining a strong focus on service, security, and reliability.

During this period, the department developed and deployed several custom solutions to streamline district operations, including a weighted vote calculation application for the School Committee and the cleanup and organization of the School Committee’s historical documents. The team also created a graduation check-in system to improve efficiency before and during the ceremony, deployed a real-time translation system for live events, and built an admissions acceptance spreadsheet that was shared and published to the district website. To further support admissions, the department launched a residency verification platform and transitioned student enrollment forms to Jotform.

The software platforms introduced earlier in the year are now fully implemented and in active use across the district, including LinkIT, EduPlanet, JobReady, GuardsPro, MagicSchool AI, August Schools, ParentSquare Pay for invoicing, and Zoom Fax. The department also continued the rollout of the software solution supporting the Health Office and School Counseling Department, expanding its use for visit tracking, paperwork, and communication. In addition, the department began the transition from Bynder to Air for storing and sharing school photos.

Cybersecurity remains a core focus. The department completed the transition of all Mac computers from Sophos antivirus to Jamf Protect, standardizing endpoint protection across the Mac fleet, while the Abnormal AI email protection implemented earlier in the year continued to defend against phishing and email-based threats.

Safety and Security

Safety and security are always paramount in education. To further enhance safety and security during the second half of the year, the District has:

- Expanded vape detector coverage from the initial six bathrooms to 35 bathrooms throughout the campus.
- Installed new security cameras in the Livestock Barn (2), Landscape/ Arbor, Farm Office, Equine Barn (2), the Main Cafe (2), and Smith Hall (2).
- Purchased cloud-based cameras for school buses that previously lacked them.
- Begun pilot testing a new smart radio system (Relay Pro) to improve campus communication and emergency response.

The school crisis team continued to meet biweekly throughout the year to debrief events, plan future training and drills, and review safety protocols and practices, and we continued our



monthly meetings with the Police Chief and Director of Community Policing, Sergeant Smith, to review concerns.

Union Relations

The District is happy to report that an agreement with HTF has been brought forward. There was collaboration on both sides throughout the process.

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 and/or as needed to keep the lines of communication open.

Conclusion

As I reflect on this year, I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished together. The achievements highlighted in this report are the result of dedicated students, talented faculty and staff, supportive families, engaged community partners, and a School Committee that consistently champions innovation and excellence.

While financial challenges remain, I am confident in our ability to navigate them together while continuing to provide exceptional agricultural, technical, and academic opportunities for our students.

Thank you for your continued trust, support, and partnership. It is an honor to serve as Superintendent-Director of Essex North Shore Agricultural and Technical School. Together, we remain committed to preparing students not only for graduation, but for successful futures in college, careers, and life.

Respectfully Submitted,

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