

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the goal of Manchester Proud?

A: Our goal is to engage our entire community in a process to develop a new aspirational and achievable strategic plan for the Manchester School District-- one that is created by and for the people of Manchester. The Manchester Proud process to build a strategic plan looks different than other districts or past plans; typically, a strategic plan is built by top officials in a district office, and then given to the schools and community. **Manchester Proud is starting with the community: we're hearing directly from residents, staff members, families, students, and business leaders first before creating the strategic plan. We aim for this initiative to invigorate our community's connection to our schools.**

Q: What is Manchester Proud doing to ensure that all voices are represented in the planning process?

A: Here is what we have done to date:

- We held two **town halls** that were open to all who live and work in Manchester.
- We have **visited almost 2000 residences**, covering all 12 wards of the city. We have had **hundreds of one-on-one conversations** with families who send their children to Manchester Public Schools and those who have chosen to send their children outside the district for various reasons. We have spoken with residents who do not have children, and those that no longer have children in the home. We have connected with folks who work here, and those who are retired.

Canvass dates and locations have been posted on our website and shared through our social media channels. All folks are welcome and strongly encouraged to participate!

- We have a [community survey](#) to hear from people who have not been available for other in-person opportunities, or from people who wanted more time to consider how they are feeling about Manchester and its schools. To date, **660 people** have shared their experiences, needs, and hopes for Manchester and its schools through this survey. We are eager to hear from even more voices. The survey is also available in Spanish and Arabic, and will be available in other languages soon. The survey will be open until the end of January.
- Over the next three months, we will hold over **100 listening sessions** for families, students, educators, staff, those who work and live in Manchester. Among those

sessions will be conversations with families who have chosen to educate their students outside of Manchester Public Schools.

We will also be hosting community listening sessions to ensure that all experiences, needs and wants are heard as part of this process. The schedule for these sessions will be posted in mid- to late-November, with information on how to participate.

Q: What is the timeframe for Manchester Proud's community engagement work?

July 2018 - February 2019: Community Engagement Discovery Phase

Here's what we have completed, so far:

We began engaging with school staff during the summer. We spoke with school leaders at each of the 22 Manchester Public Schools. Since that time, we've knocked on almost 2000 doors across the city, holding many hundreds of conversations with residents in all 12 wards in the city.

In August, we presented to over 900 Manchester educators about the Manchester Proud effort and about the upcoming opportunities they would have to participate in the community engagement initiatives.

We visited Open Houses, Parent Teacher Groups, and other school-based community events to introduce ourselves to families and invite them to our school-based listening sessions throughout September and October.

In mid-October, over 65 Manchester organizations, including the Boys and Girls Club, the Manchester Police Department, YMCA, United Way, Manchester Health Department, and the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, participated in a Community Resource Mapping workshop on October 18, hosted by Manchester Proud. Working collaboratively to explore potential opportunities for creating school-to-community partnerships, city service providers began by assessing their collective resources and creating a shared vision of what a robust network of school-to-community partnerships might look like for Manchester.

Here's what we'll be up to until the end of February:

We will be talking to students, families, educators and school staff from the Manchester School District during school-based listening sessions/focus groups. These sessions will be small group, intimate conversations where folks will all have a chance to speak to their experiences in and hopes for Manchester schools. Because of the small group structure, we are asking for RSVPs.

Beginning in December, **we will talk to people who live and work here as well as those who may not see themselves as part of the public school community.** We will do this through community-based listening sessions/focus groups. This includes, but isn't limited to, families who do not send their children to Manchester Public Schools, families whose children are in daycare, people who live and work here, and community and religious organizations. These sessions will be small group, intimate conversations where folks will all have a chance to speak to their experiences in and hopes for Manchester schools. Because of the small group structure, we are asking for RSVPs.

Our community engagement work will continue throughout the spring and will be shaped by the opportunities and key questions surfaced throughout our Discovery Phase!

Q: How is this different than the Curriculum Audit in 2013? Or other 'strategic plans' that have been developed in the past?

A: Most strategic plans are created by small groups of technical experts. Typically there is relatively limited community engagement. Manchester Proud is flipping the model and making community engagement as the foundation for the plan. We believe that in order for a plan to succeed, it needs to reflect the priorities, concerns, and aspirations of the Manchester community as a whole.

We also recognize that there is a wealth of information out there, including the [Curriculum Audit of 2013](#) and the [Manchester's Neighborhood Health Improvement Strategy](#), and we will make the most of all such resources as we build the Manchester Proud strategic plan.

Q: What will the strategic plan say?

A: Manchester Proud does not have a predetermined outcome for the plan. The strategic plan will reflect what the people of Manchester say they hope to see in our schools, what they are concerned about, and what will best position our students, families, and educators to thrive - as decided by folks across our community.

The strategic plan will encompass both important operational considerations - the nuts and bolts of effectively managing a large urban school district - and aspirational goals for the educational experiences Manchester will offer its students and families. Manchester Proud will begin building the strategic plan after it has completed the Discovery Phase of our community engagement process. And as Manchester Proud builds the plan it will continue to directly involve the community in order to ensure the final product is truly by and for the people of Manchester.

Q: Why is a strategic plan important?

A: A strategic plan provides a clear way for Manchester to know whether it is setting up its students, families, and educators for success. It lays out a framework for deciding where Manchester will focus its time and resources to help maximize student learning. And the plan will provide clear benchmarks, goals, and systems to ensure that public funds are being used wisely, with transparency and accountability to the taxpayers.

Manchester Proud believes that a strong, community-driven strategic plan will lead to great outcomes for our community, while also making the best possible use of taxpayer dollars.

Q: I don't have kids in school, so why does this matter to me?

A: Manchester's schools are a vital part of our city and they impact every single resident. Manchester Proud wants your input on the planning process as you will be a critical part of ensuring the plan is successful.

Your voice matters because:

- Manchester's schools directly affect our city's quality of life, our ability to attract and retain new businesses, and the strength of our neighborhoods.
- Decisions made about our schools can impact students and communities for a lifetime.
- Decisions should not be made in isolation, but instead, with input from all community members.
- The reputation of our city's educational system impacts everyone who lives and works here.

We believe it is critical that Manchester Proud hear from all of our residents.

Q: Is Manchester Proud an advocate for a specific set of standards, curriculum, or educational approach?

A: No. And here's why: we haven't finished our community engagement Discovery phase yet – we are still at the beginning of hearing from the community. Until this process is complete, and until we have a rich and diverse representation of the Manchester community, we will not build or advocate for any "next steps" or recommendations. **This is an intentional part of our process. If we were advocating for a specific approach, we would not be true to our mission to use the voices and perspectives of the community to shape the strategic plan.**

Q: What consulting partners has Manchester Proud selected to-date? What do they do?

A: Every consulting partner that has or will be selected by Manchester Proud is chosen through a rigorous selection process, that includes multiple candidates. They are chosen to perform specific tasks, such as coordinate community engagement or perform an assessment of our District's current operations. **They are selected based on qualifications and commitment to upholding our Mission. They have no authority to direct our work or make any decisions on behalf of our community.** And anyone among us, whether Council members or our volunteer Coordinator, who has any relationship with the proposed vendor, **has been entirely recused from the selection process.** Our high standards of ethics and propriety are never compromised.

In April 2018, Manchester Proud contracted with [Reaching Higher NH](#) to provide project management services and oversee the community engagement efforts.

Reaching Higher New Hampshire is a New Hampshire-based, nonpartisan 501c3 that works to ensure all NH children have access to an exceptional public education and the opportunity to graduate from high school ready for whatever pathway they choose. RHNH has deep experience in facilitating workshops and town hall-type events, organizing community events to gather feedback around education issues. They assist Manchester Proud as project managers and community engagement coordinators.

In October 2018, Manchester Proud received the approval of the Board of School Committee to support the membership of Manchester School District in the [Council of the Great City Schools](#). Manchester School District applied for membership and will hear back from the Council of the Great City Schools later in 2018.

The Council of the Great City Schools is a school district membership association consisting of the largest urban school district from each state and the largest urban school districts in the country overall. Its membership can be viewed [here](#). The Council of the Great City Schools provides its members with expert technical advice and consultation on important operational issues involved in running large school systems. For example, each year it produces a comprehensive [report](#) analyzing performance among its member districts on metrics such as:

- Payroll staff – overtime hours per FTE
- Procurement costs per purchasing order
- Workers compensation per employee
- Cost per meal
- Custodial costs per square foot
- Utility costs per square foot
- Health/Safety violations per site
- Safety and security expenditures per 1,000 students
- Cost per mile operated (transportation)
- Bus usage – daily runs per bus



- Teacher retention
- Exit interview completion rate
- HR cost per district FTE
- IT spending per student

As the small sampling above shows, these metrics are critical towards maximizing the efficient use of taxpayer dollars irrespective of the educational strategies Manchester adopts. The Council of the Great City Schools focuses on these types of nuts-and-bolts considerations so that its members can improve their performance and deliver better outcomes per dollar of taxpayer support.

Manchester Proud anticipates bringing on additional partners to provide specific expertise. Manchester Proud wants to ensure the planning process involves national experts so that we can learn about best practices and ideas that have proven successful in other cities in comparable situations.

Manchester Proud will hold all partners accountable in order to ensure all efforts remain rooted in our community-centric vision for Manchester's schools.

Q. What steps is Manchester Proud taking to be transparent to the Manchester community?

A: Manchester Proud has transparency embedded in all of its work. The work is done by members of the Manchester community, with Work Groups and hundreds of volunteers helping knock on doors, workshopping key issues, providing in-kind services, and gathering and analyzing data.

Manchester Proud publishes its events on its website, social media, and through a network of partners such as the Manchester School District, the Chamber of Commerce and Boys & Girls Club. We encourage members of the community to RSVP and attend events, volunteer, and otherwise get involved with the work directly.

Q: What does Manchester Proud fundraise for? What do we do with the money we raise?

A: All of the funds Manchester Proud raises go directly to support the development of a community-driven strategic plan. Manchester Proud has no paid staff or overhead and many Manchester businesses have generously provided in-kind services to support Manchester Proud, so that we can focus our funds on the planning effort.



The funds go to support canvassing, town halls, listening sessions, and other critical aspects of community engagement. Manchester Proud has already held dozens of public events and these will grow to number in the hundreds over the next few months.

In the near future, Manchester Proud will dedicate the majority of its funds to bring in national experts to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the school district and to help craft the strategic plan.