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Manchester Proud Progress Report:

May 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019

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Introduction

Over the course of the past thirteen months, Manchester Proud (MP) has made extraordinary strides forward in its movement to build a community-driven plan for the future of Manchester's public schools and each and every one of the students they support. In the summer of 2018, MP focused on building out the infrastructure needed to launch intensive community engagement and bring on a consulting partner. We recruited for, structured, and launched a series of key Work Groups: Communications, Celebrations, Consultant Selection, Fundraising, and Resource Mapping. We built out the social media, communications, and relationships channels needed to kick off the community canvasses and listening sessions -- the Discovery Phase of the work. And, we established the branding and related collateral materials needed to begin to tell Manchester Proud's story and secure the resources that would fuel the movement.

In the fall of 2018, Manchester Proud launched an epic whirlwind of community engagement. We canvassed every ward of the community, holding in-depth conversations with hundreds of residents and knocking on over 2,000 doors. We up-skilled well over 100 volunteers in non-judgmental listening, supporting them in getting to know their fellow community members, making new connections across place and community, while listening to different and yet often familiar perspectives. We launched the school-based listening sessions, offering more than 100 across all Manchester public schools and holding 39 along with 9 full-day office hours.

As winter approached, we began to train another round of community leaders to facilitate community-based listening sessions - further expanding the reach and depth of the community engagement work. In many respects, those sessions, which were held with newcomer groups, after school providers, opt-outs and charters, folks with disabilities and their advocates, emergent bi-and multi-linguals, and service providers, among many others - proved to be the most candid and nuanced. In spaces and circles of comfort - which we learned our schools often are not - community members shed light on the complexity of their experiences, challenges, and hopes.

In March of 2019, the Discovery Phase of community engagement work came to a necessary close; it was time to pivot to analyzing and interrogating the data from it and launching the work of the planning team. Manchester Proud formed the Community Planning Group and its key ancillaries - the Finance and Governance Exploratory Groups. At the same time, the Council's Ad Hoc Committee on Engaging Diverse Communities began convening, leading in the

development of the Manchester Inclusivity and Equity Committee, positioning it to launch this summer.

Today, the Community Planning Group is fully immersed in exploring the data from the Discovery Phase as well as from the planning team's deep dive into the district's finances, governance, current teaching and learning practices, and community partnerships.

It is fair to say that Manchester Proud's work over the course of these thirteen months has been an extraordinary mix of challenging, deeply meaningful, exhausting, and awesome fun -- much as we all would hope it would be.

Below, are some of Manchester Proud's key achievements and milestones. We also explore some of the challenges and learnings along the way.

Achievements

What follows is a non-exhaustive sketch, highlighting Manchester Proud's progress between May 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019.

Organizational Infrastructure Built

- Brought on project management and community engagement partner, Reaching Higher NH;
- Developed Champion's Pledges to ensure that MP's core values are upheld and advanced in all aspects of the work;
- Renamed the Manchester Proud Board the Manchester Proud Champions Council;
- Drafted and affirmed the Manchester Proud Organization, Roles, and Authority guiding doc;
- Drafted and enacted Council's Conflict of Interest Policy;
- Adapted and launched a work group structure based on Pittsburgh, PA-based [Remake Learning](#), to leverage and represent the wide range of talents embedded within the Manchester community;
- Developed Work Group Guidelines to shape the norms and values of all those engaged in MP's work;
- Recruited for and launched the Communications Work Group;
- Recruited for and launched the Consultant Selection Work Group;
- Secured monthly progress sessions with the Mayor;
- Initiated, completed, and launched the Manchester Proud website;
- Launched the MP email account and [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages;
- Recruited for and launched the Resource Mapping Exploratory Group;
- Recruited for and launched the Community Celebrations Work Group;
- Trained 85+ community members in deep canvassing and non-judgemental listening;

- Trained a cadre of 9 Manchester Proud Council members and community volunteers in effective listening session facilitation;
- Brought on planning partner, 2Revolutions (2Rev);
- Trained 20 organizational and community leaders to facilitate community-based listening sessions;
- Applied for and secured membership for the Manchester School District in the Council of Great City Schools;
- Created checklist of “Champion’s Opportunities” and added to website;
- Recruited for and launched the Community Planning Group Selection Committee;
- Launched the Community Planning Group;
- Created communications protocols for media inquiries and conducted training for CPG;
- Formed Ad Hoc Committee on Engaging Diverse Communities;
- Recruited for and launched the Finance Exploratory Group;
- Recruited for and launched the Governance Exploratory Group;
- Proposal for formation of Manchester Inclusivity and Equity Committee supported and planning work initiated;
- Grew the list of formal MP Champions pledge signatories to **250+**; and,
- Grew the list of MP subscribers to: **1,734**.

Champions Council & Work & Exploratory Groups

Champions Council

- Formally named and organized in March 2018.
- Held **18** meetings between May 2018 and June 2019.

Fundraising Work Group

- Launched in May 2018.
- Created fund “Case Documents” for use in fundraising visits.
- Raised **\$790,015**
- Held **10** meetings and **countless donor visits**.

Communications Work Group

- Launched in May 2018.
- Held **12** meetings.

In the summer of 2018, the Communications Work Group focused on branding -- developing the logo and branded fundraising collateral and formalizing a launch-phase communications plan. Beginning in early fall 2018, the group focused on leveraging opportunities to expand Manchester Proud’s reach - running PSAs, placing content in local and statewide media sources, doing television and radio interviews, and producing a short video. The list below captures some related highlights.

- In-depth coverage in *NH Business Review*, November and December 2018;

- First round of PSAs for *Frank FM* launched in December 2018;
- Feature interview on the *Daily Dion* on Manchester Proud's community engagement on January 17, 2019;
- *Manchester Public Radio*, Jack Kenney interview on February 27, 2019;
- *WGIR* Jack Heath radio interview on March 11, 2019;
- Feature in *Parenting NH* in March 2019 issue;
- Production of "[Imagine Our Manchester](#)" video, released on April 18, 2019 at the Greater Manchester Chamber's Annual Citizen of the Year Dinner and filmed at the Palace Theatre;
- *Manchester Radio Group*, PSA voiced by four former Manchester mayor's, to be aired in summer of 2019; and,
- *Manchester Radio Group* - Proposal being developed for sponsored ad campaign to rally support for MP.

Consultant Selection Work Group

- Launched in June 2018.
- Held **10** meetings.

The Consultant Selection Work Group (CSWG) met throughout the summer and fall of 2018. The group workshopped MP's specific planning consultant needs and a corresponding request for proposals (RFP) with the CSWG, held a webinar for **26 interested parties** on the RFP, reviewed **applications from 9** consulting firms, developed a rubric and application evaluation strategy, and **held interviews with 4 firms**. The group **unanimously agreed upon [2Revolutions](#) in November 2018**.

Community Celebrations Work Group

- Launched in August 2018.
- Held **16** meetings.
- Key events:
 - November 13, 2018 - Manchester Proud Banner Hanging;
 - December 1, 2018 - Grand Marshal of Christmas Parade;
 - February 7, 2019 - MSD Parent Dinner at SNHU;
 - March 3, 2019 - Sent letter of thanks to MP Donors;
 - March 31, 2019 - St. Patrick's Day Parade; and,
 - May 7, 2019 - Sent letter of thanks to MSD teachers.

The work of Celebrations Work Group is expected to intensify in late 2019 through early 2020 as all of Manchester Proud works to focus the community's attention on our schools and emerging plan. Among the many opportunities the Work Group is exploring, are a program of storytelling - highlighting causes for celebration in our schools, and an evening with a celebrated graduate.

Resourcing Mapping Exploratory Group

- Launched in August 2018.
- Held **10** meetings.

On October 18, 2018, Manchester Proud convened a major community resource mapping workshop with **80+** community leaders and organizations participating to share a variety of data and thoughts about their individual work, trends they observe in the city, and opportunities to raise student outcomes through improved school-community partnerships. Participants also engaged with a panel of national experts on school-community partnerships from across the country.

Subsequently, in the winter of 2019, Dr. Adam Gilbert, an Associate Professor at Southern NH University, engaged his students in an analysis of the data collected during the October 2018 workshop. Members of MP's Council attended the students' final presentation and their findings have been shared with MP's planning team.

Community Planning Group

- Application process for Community Planning Group launched in January 2019.
- Search committee for the Community Planning Group launched in February 2019.
- Community Planning Group launched in March 2019.
- Held **5** meetings.

The Community Planning Group began meeting in March 2019. Its first two meetings focused on onramping members into the work of Manchester Proud and providing space for the group to establish its governance structure and core processes. In May, the group pivoted to a series of deep-dives on data, with related deep-dive sessions led by 2Rev and Reaching Higher NH. In June, the group began exploring 2Rev's early hunches.

Ad Hoc Committee on Engaging Diverse Communities

- Began formal meetings in March 2019.
- Held **over 15** meetings and calls.
- Developed a proposed structure and governance model for a future Manchester Inclusivity and Equity Committee.

In March 2018, as Manchester Proud pivoted from the Discovery Phase to the Planning Phase of the work and launched the Community Planning Group, some members of Manchester's African American community expressed concern that Manchester Proud, in spite of its best intentions, may nevertheless be advancing the agenda of the city's white business community. These concerns were exacerbated by the independent selection process for the Community Planning Group - which fell short of adequately representing people of color, English language learners, newcomers, and low-income families.

Three members of Manchester Proud's Champion's Council, Talmira Hill, Pawn Nitichan and Kathy Cook, formed an Ad Hoc Committee on Engaging Diverse Communities to map out a proposal for a Manchester Inclusivity and Equity Committee (IEC) dedicated to addressing issues of equity and inclusion in the planning process-- and beyond.

The IEC will center on community members of color in Manchester, ensuring their voices and leadership are reflected in the planning process, the plan itself, and the vital community dialogue that Manchester Proud aims to catalyze along the way. *Launching the IEC is among the most important opportunities for Manchester Proud to meaningfully contribute to the structural and corresponding cultural changes vital to the success of each and every Manchester student, their families, and the community as a whole.*

Governance Exploratory Group

- Recruited and launched in April 2019.
- Held **2** meetings.

Governance experts from Manchester and beyond have been meeting to study the district's governance policies and structure with an eye toward how it can more effectively support the development of transformational learning.

Finance Exploratory Group

- Recruited and launched in April 2019.
- Held **2** meetings.

Finance professionals and data analysts from across the community have been meeting to study the school district's budget and better understand expenditures and potential revenue sources.

Strategy & Coordination Meetings & Calls with the Planning Team

- Initiated in December 2018.
- Held **31** meetings and/or calls.

Beginning in December 2018, Manchester Proud had regular strategy and coordination calls with 2Rev and Reaching Higher NH, ensuring seamless integration of engagement, communications, and planning work. During these check-ins and strategy sessions, we built the agendas for Community Planning Group and Finance and Governance Exploratory Group convenings. Key discussion points included: alignment of communications with upcoming milestones and opportunities, continually sharing feedback on the focal points and outputs of the work of the planning firm, updates on policy issues at the state level that have bearing on Manchester, and strategies for the coming months of work and engagement.

Community Engagement Highlights

- Developed and launched volunteer survey to build out community-sourced capacity for upcoming canvassing, town halls, and listening sessions.
- Interested volunteers who completed the survey as of the writing of this report totaled **74**.
- Presented about Manchester Proud to school staff in **18 schools**.
- Attended and/or presented at **27** school events for families across **19 schools**.
- Canvassed all **12** wards with **over 110** canvassers who knocked on **over 2,000** doors and held in-depth conversations with **482** residents.
- Hosted **4** Town Halls.
- Developed, launched, and analyzed the community survey, which was offered in **6** languages.
- Respondents who **completed** the community survey totaled **983**.
- Hosted **39** school-based listening sessions.
- Hosted **9** full-day office hours.
- Held 1:1 interviews with **22** principals.
- Held **42** additional 1:1s with community members.
- School-based sessions participants totaled **353**.
- Trained **20** community facilitators and supported **23** community-based listening sessions.
- Community-based sessions participants totaled **171**.
- Implemented Community Planning Group application (not selection) process. Applications received totaled **90**.

Events & Key Presentations - Highlights

- Manchester Proud successfully presented its community-based planning offer to the Board of School Committee on May 14, 2018.
- Special Session: Manchester School District Data Profile for Manchester Proud Champions Council on June 21, 2018. Presenters: Reaching Higher NH.
- Manchester Proud provided the Manchester Board of School Committee with an update at the BOSC's regular meeting on August 27, 2018.
- Keynote presentation - Manchester Proud: Championing Student Success at NH School Administrators Annual Meeting at the Grappone Center in Concord on September 24, 2018. Presenters: Manchester Proud and Reaching Higher NH.
- Special Session: Community Engagement Briefing for MP Champions Council, Consultant Selection WG, and key community partners at Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce on October 4, 2018. Presenters: Reaching Higher NH.
- Manchester Proud provided the Manchester Board of School Committee with an update at the BOSC's regular meeting on October 16, 2018.
- Resource Mapping Workshop at the Radisson Hotel in Manchester, October 18, 2018. Lead: Reaching Higher NH.
- Manchester Proud provided the Manchester Board of School Committee with an update at the BOSC's regular meeting on November 13, 2018.

- Presentation at Bean Foundation's Annual Meeting at Daniel Webster Council's camp on November 28, 2018. Presenters: Manchester Proud and Reaching Higher NH.
- Presentation to Leadership NH at SNHU, November 8, 2018. Presenters: Manchester Proud and Reaching Higher NH.
- Special Introductory Session: 2Revolutions, Manchester Proud, Reaching Higher, and the Manchester School District, convening at Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce on January 9, 2019.
- Manchester Proud provided the Manchester Board of School Committee with an update at the BOSC's regular meeting on January 14, 2019.
- Convened a Manchester School District Parents Dinner with special presentation on MP at Southern NH University on February 7, 2019. Facilitator: Reaching Higher NH.
- Manchester Proud provided the Manchester Board of Mayor and Aldermen with an update at the BOMA's regular meeting on March 5, 2019.
- Special presentation on Manchester Proud to the five bargaining units on March 7, 2019.
- Table display at the Endowment for Health Annual Meeting on March 18, 2019.
- "The Power & Reality of Authentic Community Engagement in a District Strategic Plan" - Workshops at the New England Secondary Schools Consortium's School Redesign in Action Annual Conference, on March 25 & 26, 2019. Presenters: Manchester Proud and Reaching Higher NH.
- Presentation on the essential role of our schools at NeighborWorks Annual Meeting - April 4, 2019. Presenter: Manchester Proud.
- Presentation to Manchester Rotary Club on April 22, 2019.
- Presentation at Business Social Responsibility Annual Meeting May 1, 2019.
- Special Session - Community Engagement Findings Presentation for Mayor & Vice-Chair of BOSC on May 7, 2019. Leads: Reaching Higher NH.
- Special joint session - MP Champions Council, Community Planning Group, Finance Exploratory Group, and Governance Exploratory Group on Community Engagement Findings on May 7, 2019 at the Millyard Museum. Presenter: Reaching Higher NH.

Manchester Proud Awards

- Manchester Christmas Parade - Grand Marshal in December 2018;
- NH Business Review BOB Award on May 14, 2019 ; and,
- Granite United Way Advocate of the Year Award on April 3, 2019.

Meetings with the Mayor

- Held **12** meetings between April, 2018 and June 30, 2019.

Beginning in April, 2018, Manchester Proud had standing monthly (approximately) meetings with Mayor Craig. The purpose of those meetings has been to keep the Mayor apprised of Manchester Proud's work. Beginning in July of 2019, BOSC Vice Chair, Arthur Beaudry, will also participate in these meetings.

Challenges & Essential Findings

Teacher Contract

It would be hard to overstate the impact of the lack of a teacher contract on the course and scope of the community engagement work. The absence of a contract hindered opportunities for teachers to participate in the school-based listening sessions. As teachers adhered to “work to rule” (the policy of working from the start to the end of the contract work hours, and not beyond those hours), options for their participation in the sessions were limited. And, the lack of a contract exacerbated what we soon came to understand to be deep issues of mistrust and an overall sense of demoralization across the district.

Ready to recalibrate based on our findings, we continually adapted the listening session model - from time of day, to the type of day, to the format of the sessions themselves. The approach that proved most successful in reaching teachers (and school staff), was full-day office hours. While that proved effective in creating more of a safe space for teachers and staff to voice their experiences, it meant a loss of an opportunity for folks to listen to each other - and see areas of commonality or difference that would begin to bridge new and/or frayed relationships.

The impact of the lack of a contract went beyond that, however. For all the same reasons, almost no teachers participated in the community canvasses. This represented a loss of an opportunity for folks in the community who feel disconnected from, or otherwise complicated feelings about, the school district, to connect directly with Manchester’s teachers. It also meant that teachers did not get to hear for themselves, what we so often heard at the doors (and indeed throughout the community engagement): Manchester teachers are among the district’s greatest assets. It may have boosted both morale and understanding -- for all.

Volunteer Engagement

There is no shortage of community members ready to move Manchester Proud forward. There is a strong and ever-growing sense in the community that the need to reimagine the Manchester’s public schools - and the outcomes that can be achieved by each and every one of our students - is critical. And to that end, recruitment for the various work groups and exploratory groups that are the hubs of much of Manchester Proud’s work, has been remarkably easy.

The challenge, however, is effective volunteer engagement and action in the timeframe we have - and even pushed out until 2020, that timeframe is compressed. If Manchester Proud aimed solely to draft a strategic plan for the district, volunteer engagement could focus on specific inputs and outputs - packageable results, straightforward asks. But, Manchester Proud is ultimately a movement to fundamentally shift the culture of the city - putting students and the schools that help build them up, at the center of our collective consciousness. The work takes place in a complex political environment - meaning that every facet of it must be carried forward with intentionality. And, we also ask our volunteers to move together as part of Manchester

Proud's distributed power model - with work groups leading their respective charges, sometimes asynchronously, other times, simultaneously.

And so with all of that in mind, it necessarily takes time to support volunteers in building the knowledge, trust, and comfort they need to fully engage. Each work group, without exception, has needed intensive and dedicated time to organize itself, explore the information needed to do the work, and ask the questions that naturally arise along the way. How are all the different parts of Manchester Proud woven together? What is our role in the work? Who makes the final decision on [insert whatever the group is charged with leading]? What role does the Champions Council play? How much power do we have in setting the course of Manchester Proud's work? How does what we do intersect with the political forces of our city? What is our role in building support for this work? When are we speaking on behalf of Manchester Proud? Our own community? Ourselves?

Thus, we often see that the greatest amount of work, is moved by a smaller subset of those volunteers who have the most comfort with all the information and variables noted above. This feels as normal as it does challenging; *the core goal is to provide the supports and opportunities necessary to vastly broaden the base of highly engaged volunteer leaders.*

Changes to the Superintendency

No one anticipated the sudden resignation of Superintendent Dr. Vargas in January 2019. A part of the Manchester Proud Champions Council and Consultant Selection Work Group, integral to the Manchester Proud effort, and the administrative leader of the district - the impact of Dr. Vargas' departure has been significant. This news added a whole new layer to the planning timeframe and process, and pulled everyone involved with Manchester Proud - and the district itself - in a number of critical directions at the start of the year. But, as with all challenges, it also presented an opportunity -- this time, to support the district as it launched a search for a new leader. And today, there is open space to build an impactful relationship with the new superintendent.

2019 Legislative Session

The 2019 legislative session had 20+ bills on school funding in committee - with the most key bills, as they pertain to potential resources from the state for Manchester, all folded into the budget. Given the overall scarcity of resources in the Manchester School District any and all of these proposed shifts in funding, would have a profound impact on Manchester schools and Manchester Proud's own planning process-- which must be resource-aligned. With the budget now vetoed, there is ambiguity about how these questions of state supports for the district will play out.

Local Elections

The November elections will bring a whole new slate of Board of School Committee Members to the table - with nearly half the current board not seeking re-election, and some current seats potentially contested. This means the board that offered its unanimous support to Manchester

Proud in May 2018, will not be the board that Manchester Proud engages as, and when, the planning comes to fruition. Manchester Proud endeavors to stay removed from politics. But the changing climate of elected leaders in the city promises to add to the challenge of its apolitical positioning.

Timing

So much of what is captured above pertains to timing. To realize its mission, Manchester Proud needs to both harness the energy in support of this movement --today, and balance it with the slow and seminal work of building trust and relationships where they are absent or fractured - *particularly when it comes to shedding light on, communicating about, and addressing, the structural inequities that have meant our schools uphold the promise of opportunity for some, but not all of our students.*

It is true that business leaders from across the city catalyzed the founding of Manchester Proud. And, the abbreviated timeframes that often characterize the business world, sometimes feel antithetical to Manchester Proud's work of building community. This balancing act plays out in all aspects of Manchester Proud, with no simple answers.

What is Manchester Proud, Going Forward?

In the launch phase of Manchester Proud, the 'what' and 'who' of Manchester Proud was reasonably straightforward. The Champions Council, as the founders of the movement, its fundraisers, early governing body, and the overall public face of it, had a clear and critical role. As the Work Groups formed, each with their own unique charge, and as Manchester Proud's volunteer base of leaders grew, the 'what' and 'who' of Manchester Proud began to evolve -- as we all hoped it would.

Today, with the Community Planning Group leading the charge in the planning work, and the Manchester Inclusivity and Equity Committee nearly launched, the 'what' and 'who' are evolving at an even faster pace. There has always been a strong sense that the Champions Council itself will also need to evolve as the movement progresses - particularly in recognition that it is not representative of the broader community. How the Council, CPG, IEC and perhaps some as-yet unformed work group or body will intersect with each other and perhaps take new shape(s) in the coming months and years, is not yet known. This uncertainty, while a reflection of Manchester Proud's authenticity as a movement, makes telling the story of Manchester Proud and responding to questions about the 'who' and 'what' of it for volunteers and community members, challenging. As the plan is brought forward, however, it will be essential to have some resolution of these issues -- in part because having clarity about the 'who' and 'what' of Manchester Proud, will inspire greater confidence both in the plan, and in Manchester Proud's ability to help ensure that it is implemented.

Marking Key Decision Points

Formation of the Manchester Inclusivity and Equity Committee

On pages 5 and 6, this report describes in some detail the impetus for the soon-to-be launched Manchester Inclusivity and Equity Committee. Building on what has already been captured, it is worth noting that the launching and leadership of this Committee, has the extraordinary potential to mark a genuine turning point in the community -- demonstrating the seriousness of the inequities experienced by communities of color in Manchester, and Manchester Proud's commitment to naming and beginning to address them. *It is an opportunity to powerfully move from words to committed action, no matter how uncomfortable and challenging it may often be.*

Shifting the Timeline

Following several months of conversations across the Community Planning Group, Champions Council, the Ad Hoc Committee on Engaging Diverse Communities, and 2Rev and Reaching Higher NH, the Council made the strategic decision in June 2019, to shift the timeframe for its delivery of a plan (or, its component parts) to the Board of School Committee from the fall of 2019, to later in the first quarter of 2020. The factors highlighted above - from a changing superintendency, legislative variables, local elections, the need to ensure sufficient time to launch and engage the Manchester Inclusivity and Equity Committee, combined with the Community Planning Group's strong desire to dig into, and take ownership of, the planning process, made the adjustment of the overall timeline of the work strategic.

Recommendations Going Forward

It is instructive to reflect back on Manchester Proud's commitments, as offered to the Board of School Committee in May 2018. Here they are:

1. Fully resource MSD's strategic planning team. Manchester Proud will provide funding for four capacities: **project management** over the strategic planning effort, national-class strategic **consulting**, intensive **community engagement**, and clear and informative **communications**;
2. Embed **accountability** into the strategic planning effort to ensure fidelity to a community-centric approach. Manchester Proud will participate in selecting the planning team and will expect them to **deploy resources effectively** and **transparently** throughout the process and maintain dedication to genuine community engagement and empowerment. We have high standards in terms of accountability and will enforce them throughout the process; and,
3. **Champion the realization** of an **equitable, aspirational, and inclusive vision for our schools**. Manchester Proud is a committed partner – we are here for the long-term– and will dedicate our own personal energies (in addition to resources) to listening to, and working closely with, communities throughout the city to affect positive change.

Overall, Manchester Proud has been very effective in adhering to its core commitments. The work has been complex and often challenging. *A spirit of humility and willingness to continually learn has been essential to the work.* This has meant that when new opportunities and challenges have arisen, there has been an openness to explore them and recalibrate-- when needed and appropriate.