

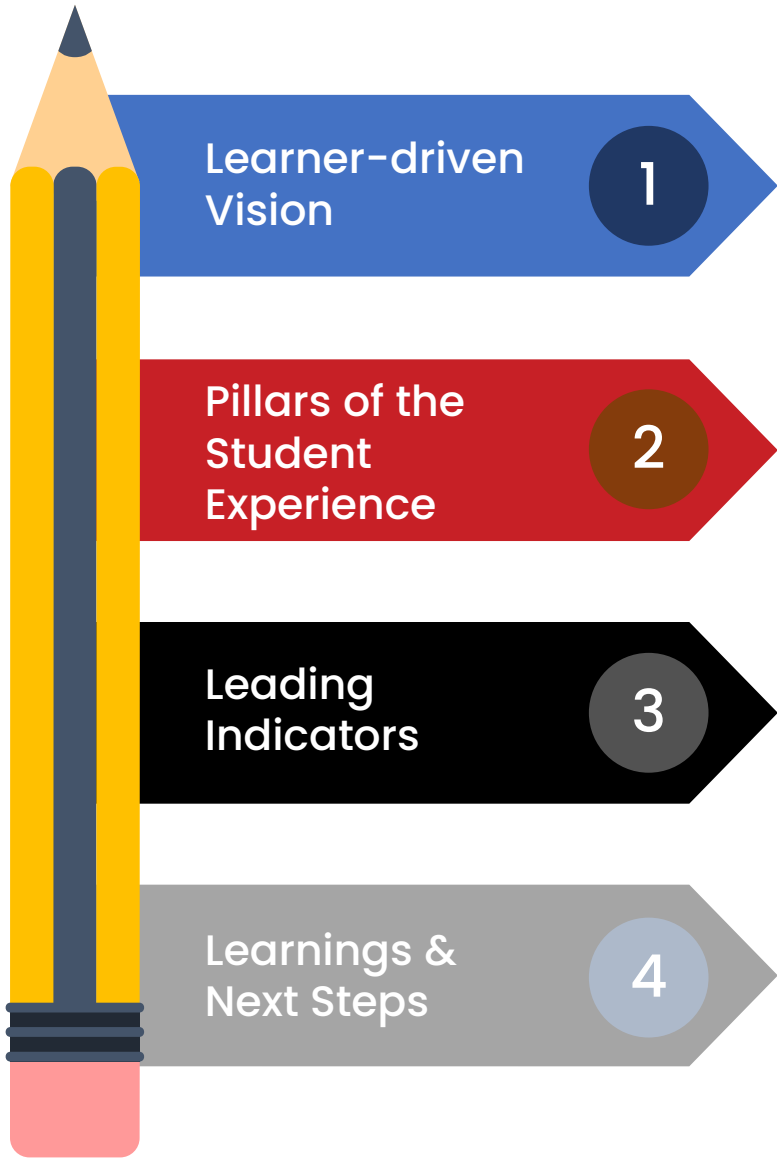


SALEM
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Where belonging leads to opportunity.

Middle School Update

Monday, September 16th





In 2022-23, coming out of COVID, SPS sought to reimagine middle school for the opportunities and challenges of a new context & changing world



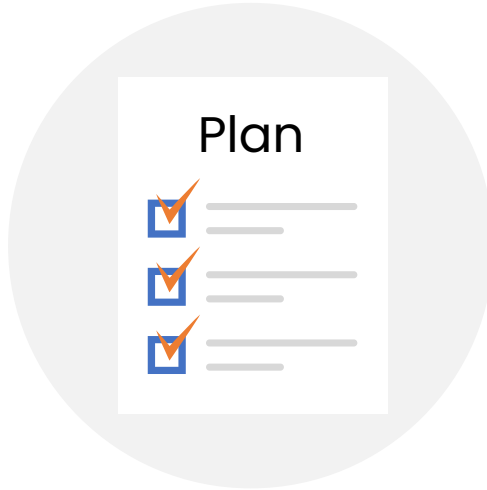
Call to Action: Post-pandemic middle school

How might we address low levels of engagement, high chronic absenteeism, and educator burnout to reinvigorate the middle school experience?



Inclusive Design: A pilot & a task force

How might we build a shared vision and co-design solutions for learners by creating new opportunities for connection, empowerment, and growth?



Collaborative Growth: Plan for system change

How might we grow from a small start that enabled innovation, identify high-impact interventions, & demonstrate what is possible, to ensure we build towards scalable and sustainable leaps in practice for all?





Vision for Middle School Learners:

Powered by relationships, trust, and a **sense of belonging**, I've developed my identity, skills, and mindsets that **empower me** to navigate my learning and chart my course and engage with my community to reach my academic and life **potential**.

Our Goals



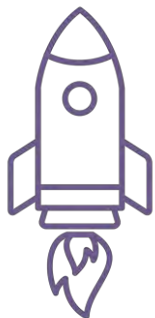
1. **Connected (Conectado)**: To each other, to your learning, & to Salem

- To help you **“love” school** and learning



2. **Empowered (Con poder)**: To help you know what you want, set goals, and know how to reach them

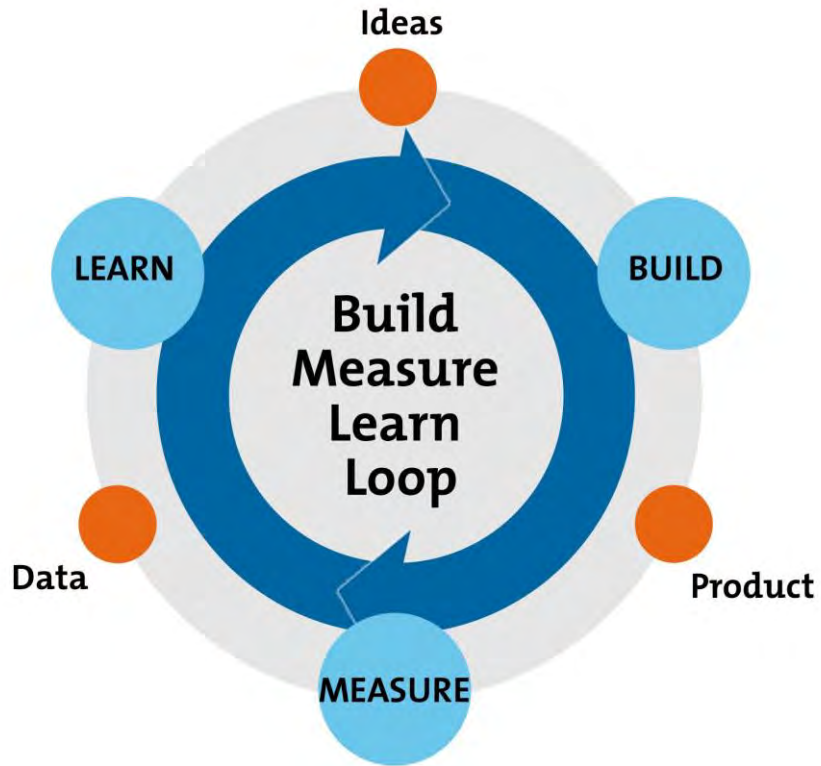
- To do **hard things** and **get the support to do them**
- For your **voice to matter** & to help **shape the learning**



3. **Growing (Creciendo/Crecimiento)**: To help **every student** be the best version of themselves and as **prepared for high school** as possible



To bring this vision to life, we use human-centered design to drive continuous improvement



- » Student, family, and educator voices are shaping the design and iteration within this work (e.g., Transcend Leaps Survey)
- » We are applying the district's data-informed practices to the whole child experience, investing stakeholders in continuous improvement ("learning loops")
- » We seek feedback at each step with the goal to always improve the next version

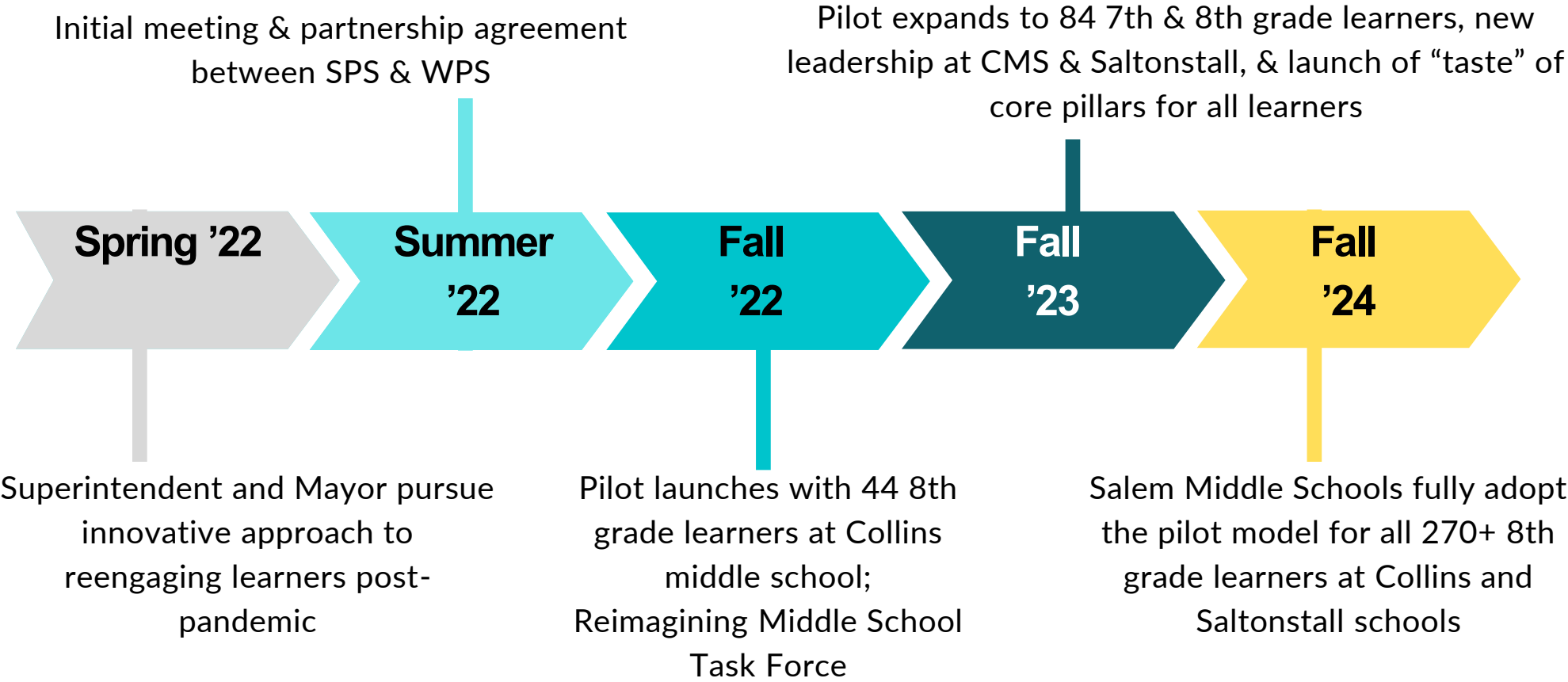


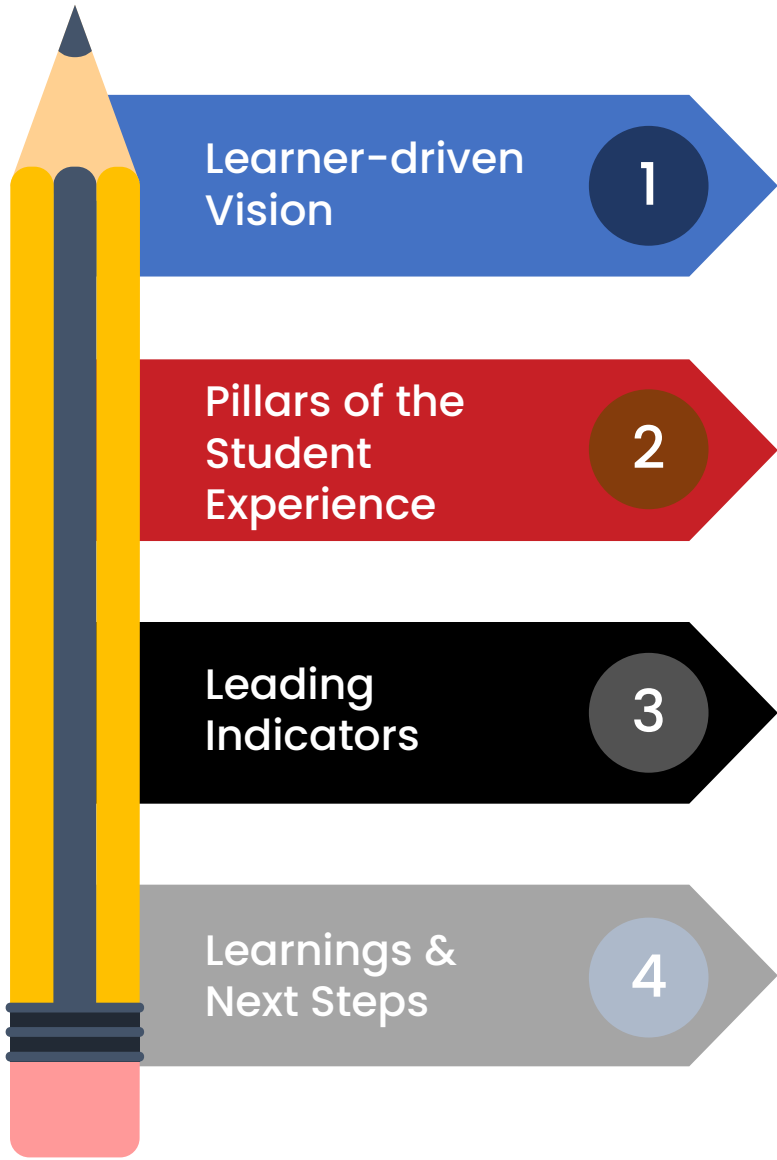
CMS & Saltonstall have simultaneously worked to create the conditions for success school-wide

- Aligned and empowered teams of educators with shared buy-in to improve opportunities for students
- New strategies for support (e.g., Connect for Success, Student Success Advisors) that create the capacity and opportunity to develop adolescents' skills
- Thoughtful work to scale practices that work through “taste” elements



This has enabled pilot expansion and continuous improvement at both schools





Pillars of the Middle School Student Experience



**Foundation:
Student Voice &
Learner Profiles**

**Studio
Learning**



**Personalized
Learning**

**Community-
based
Learning**



**Connection
&
Community**



Transforming WHERE learning happens

Instead of spending every day in the classroom and inside the school building,

We are leaving school regularly to learn in real world contexts:

- Collaborating with the Ipswich River Watershed Association to restore habitats
- Participating in exhibit design with the Peabody Essex Museum
- Seeing cutting-edge robotics at UMass Lowell's NERVE center



As a result, students

- Feel more **integrated** into the community where they live
- Have expanded **opportunities to connect** with each other
- Experience **relevant learning** that helps them contribute to their community



Transforming HOW learning happens

To bridge the silos between subjects and empower students to drive their learning, we are building upon high quality curricula and data-informed core academics to:

- engage in **interdisciplinary, hands-on problem-solving and prototyping** in Design studio, in response to local, real-world challenges
- anchor individual students in **goal-setting & monitoring** to empower them with the tools and skills to achieve mastery



As a result, students:

- Learn to **collaborate** with their peers and persist in the face of challenges
- Cultivate **curiosity** and **creativity**
- Set goals, pursue topics that interest them, and understand how they learn best



Transforming WITH WHOM learning happens

Instead of spending their days with the same group of grade-level peers and teachers, students are:

- Exploring interests and future goals with college student mentors from Salem State Univ. utilizing Univ. of Penn.'s "**Possibility Mentoring**" model
- Learning from and connecting with **local professionals** and experts in their fields
- **Becoming mentors** themselves for elementary students



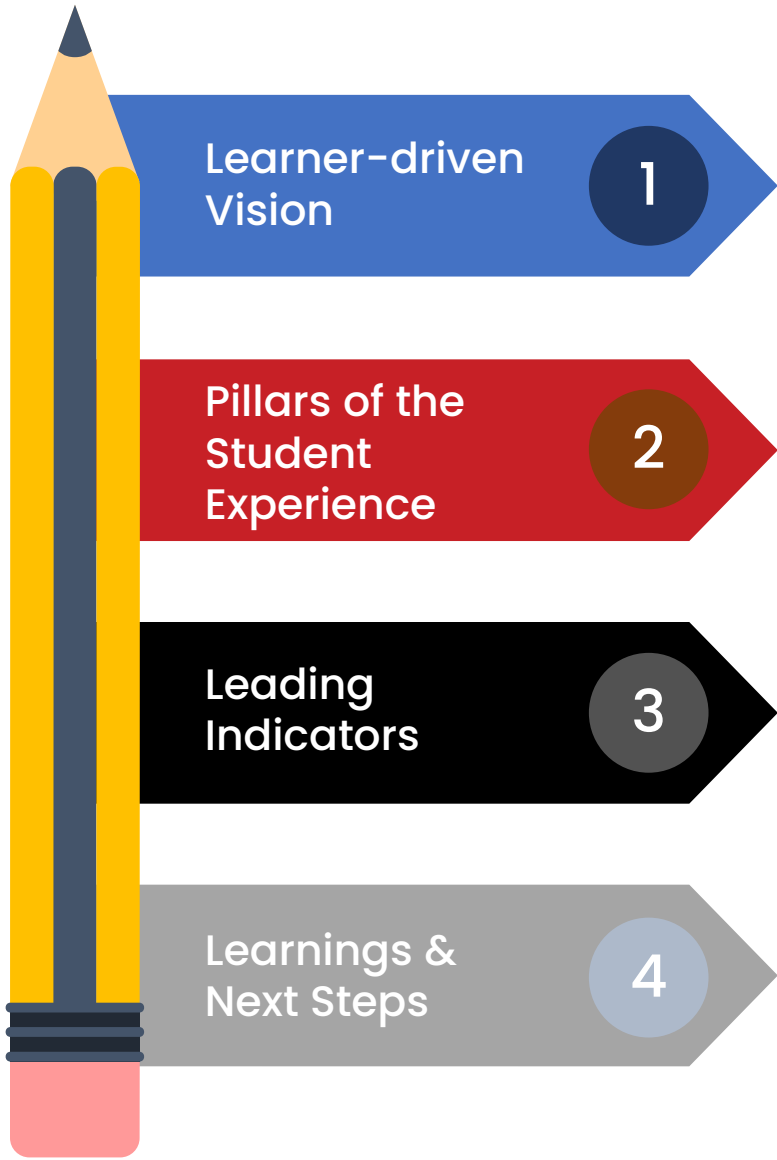
As a result, students:

- Feel inspired by **near-peers**
- Begin **to build a network** within their community
- **Imagine future possibilities** and invest in their learning today

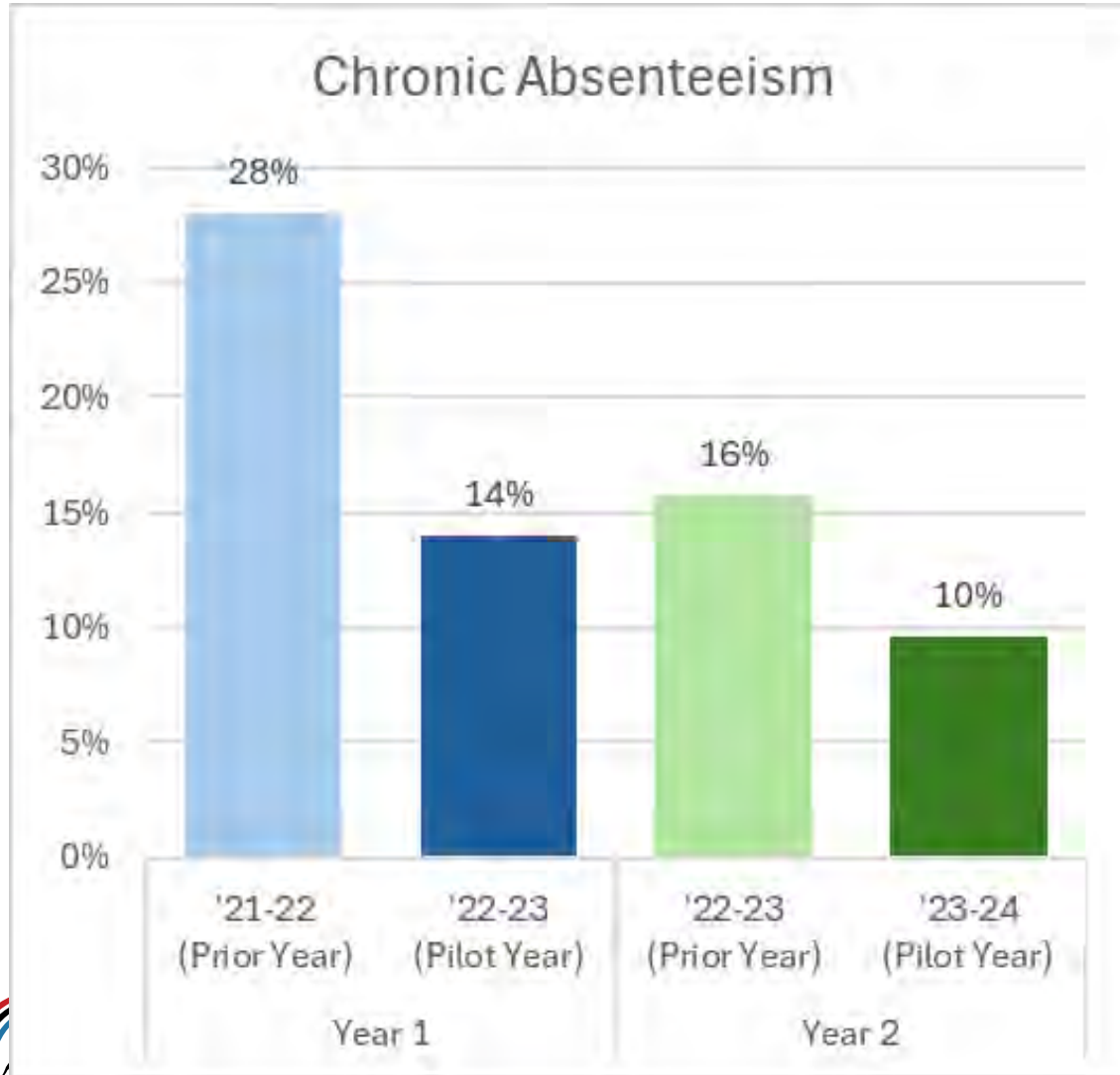


This work comes to life with the support of amazing community partners





Leading Indicators: Improved Attendance

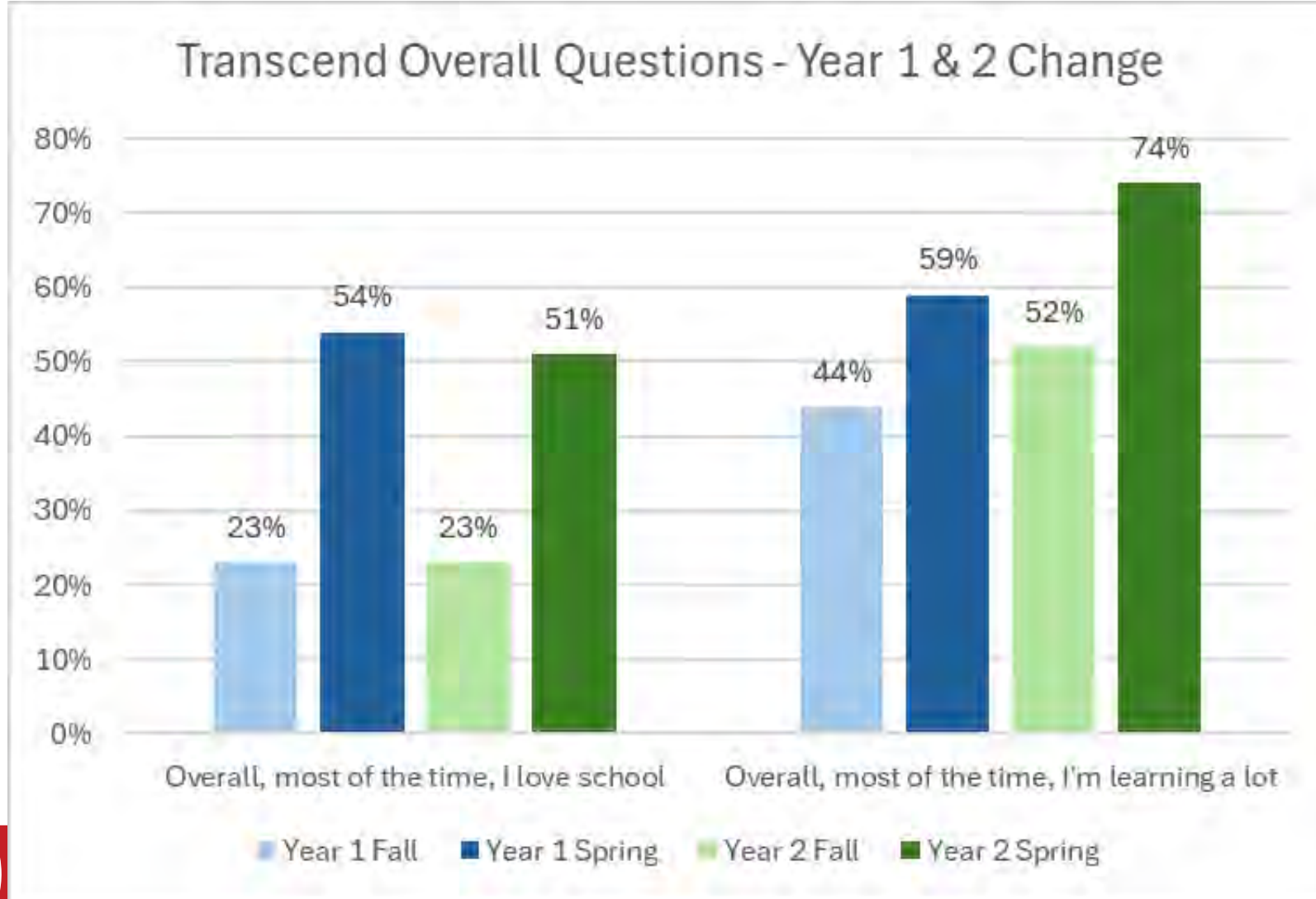


Students don't want to miss school...

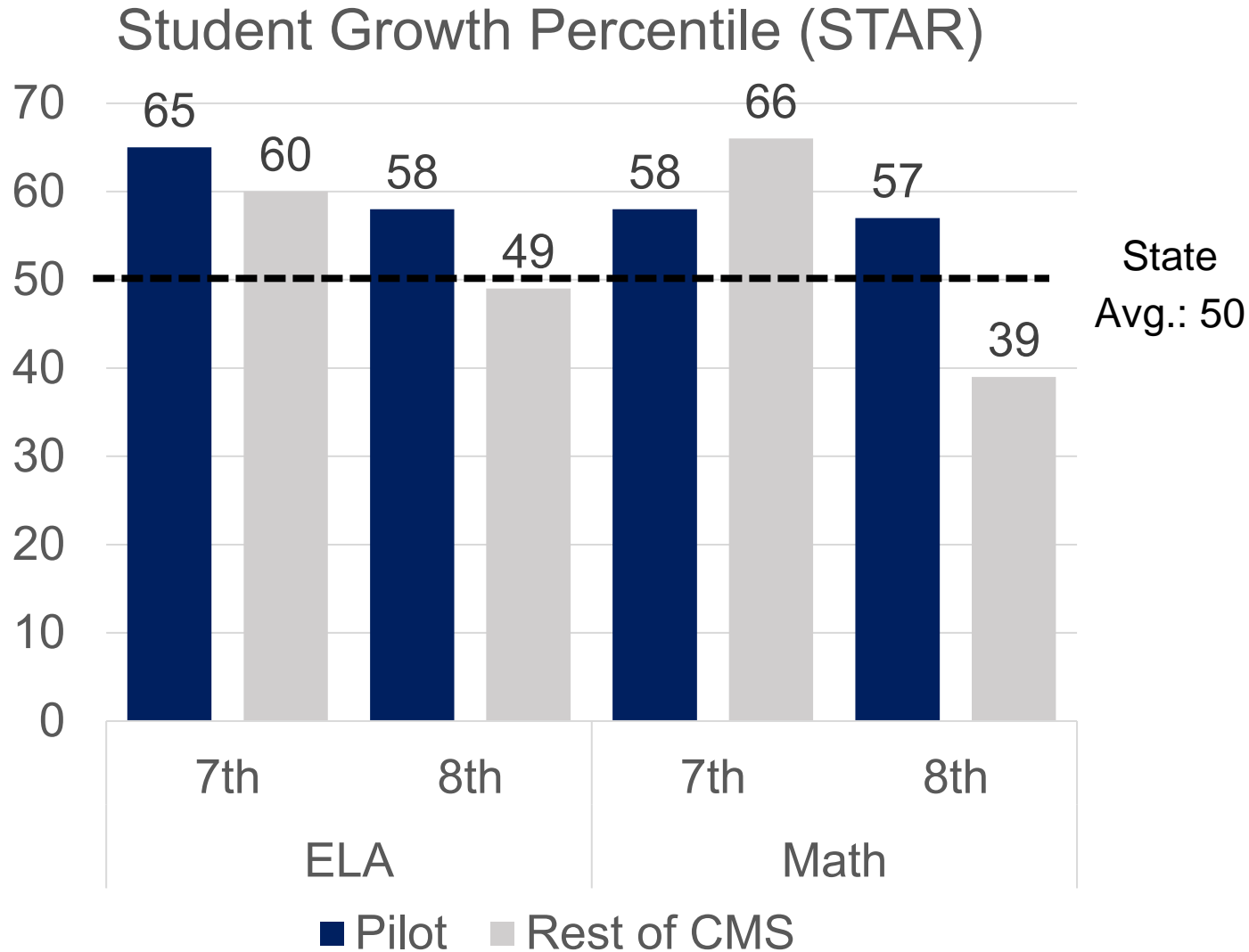
- 9.6% Chronic Absenteeism 23-24 for pilot students (16% for CMS as a whole!)
- Comparing the same cohorts of students, 50% decrease in chronic absenteeism in Year 1 and 39% in Year 2 of the pilot
- Significantly lower than most urban middle schools (20-25%). The pilot's chronic absenteeism outperformed Beverly & Marblehead



Leading Indicators: Student Experience



Leading Indicators: Academic Growth



And students are growing as a result...

- In Year 1, Pilot students outperformed the rest of the school in ELA and Science on MCAS
- Year 2 MCAS data is embargoed; in end of year ELA internal assessments, **proficiency rates grew by >5% in each grade in ELA** and all subjects/grades had >50 SGP

Leading Indicators: Teacher & Family Satisfaction



TEACHER SATISFACTION

We see positive indicators for teacher retention.

100%

Agree: "Since joining the pilot, I feel I am more likely to continue teaching at CMS."

FAMILY SATISFACTION

The pilot met families' expectations.

90%

Agree: "All in all, I'm very satisfied with my child's program."



Leading Indicators: Interest in learning beyond SPS

The New York Times

OPINION
LETTERS

How to Reduce Student Absenteeism

Readers discuss the reasons for the spike since the pandemic and how to lure students back.

April 13, 2024

To the Editor:

“[Pandemic Effect: Absence From Schools Is Soaring](#)” (front page, March 30) highlights the persistent challenge of chronic absenteeism in U.S. schools. If pandemic-related “cultural shifts” are among the factors keeping students away from school, bringing them back may require us to rethink the culture of education itself.

Despite the efforts of many visionary educators, too many schools still offer a deskbound, test- and compliance-driven experience that leaves students passive, uninspired and flat-out bored.

Over the last two years, a [pilot program in Salem, Mass.](#), has succeeded in cutting chronic absenteeism among middle schoolers in half by listening to students and designing learning with their interests in mind, including regular field trips, hands-on projects and mentoring with college students. Today, the chronic absenteeism rate among the pilot cohort of seventh and eighth graders hovers at 8 percent, in no small part because students don’t want to miss what’s on offer at school.

The Boston Globe

Learning to love school: A blueprint for student engagement

Using innovative education techniques, a pilot program of Salem middle school students saw chronic absenteeism drop by more than 50 percent.

By [Gerald Chan and Steve Zrike](#) Updated January 30, 2024, 3:00 a.m.



Salem students engage in the community with activities such as creating tours of the Peabody Essex Museum. ERIN CLARK/GLOBE STAFF

- 23-24 Essex County Learning Collaborative (ECLC) “Reimagining Middle School” Cohort
- Peabody’s middle school launching 6th grade partnership with WPS
- Multiple site visits & inquiries to learn more

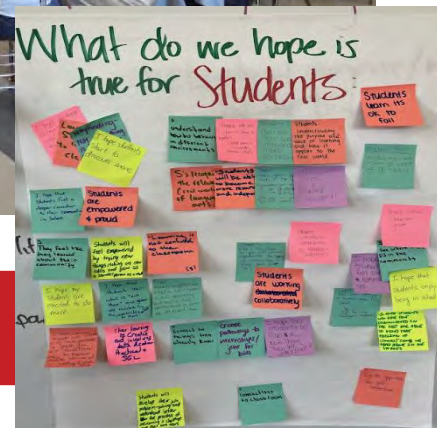


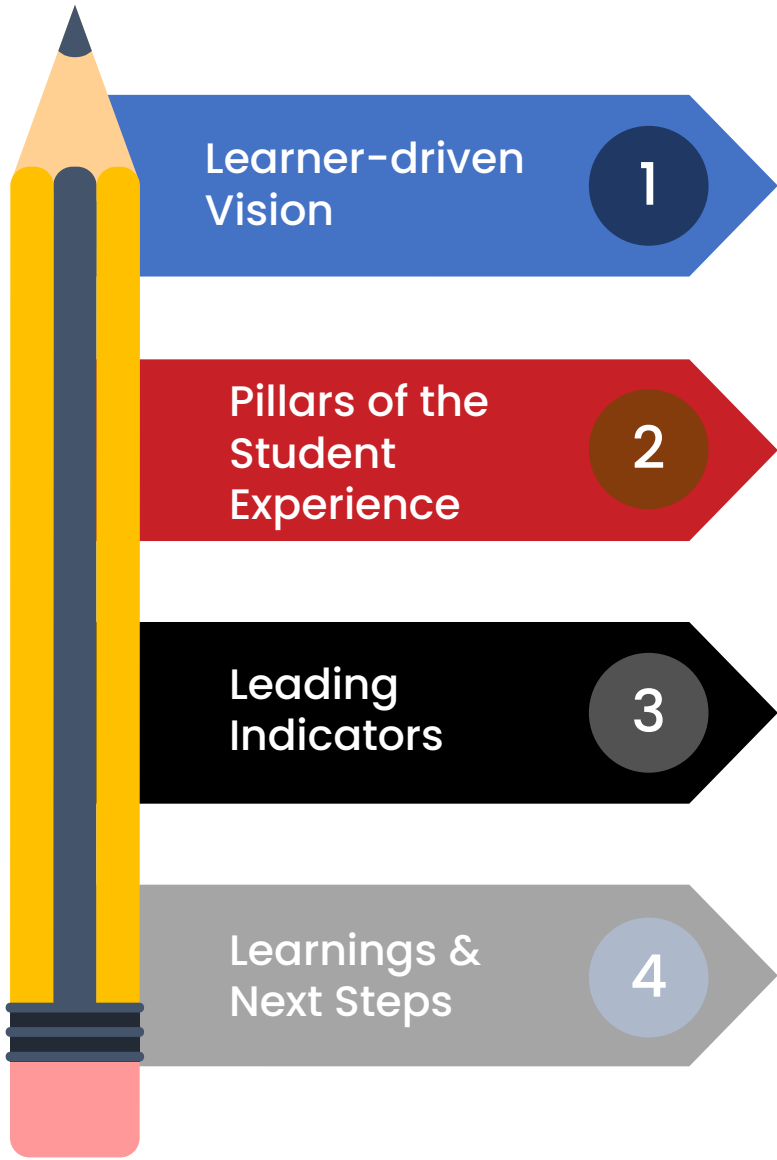
Leading Indicators: Strong start to 24-25 SY at Saltonstall & CMS

Two weeks of summer professional learning for all 8th grade educators in the district

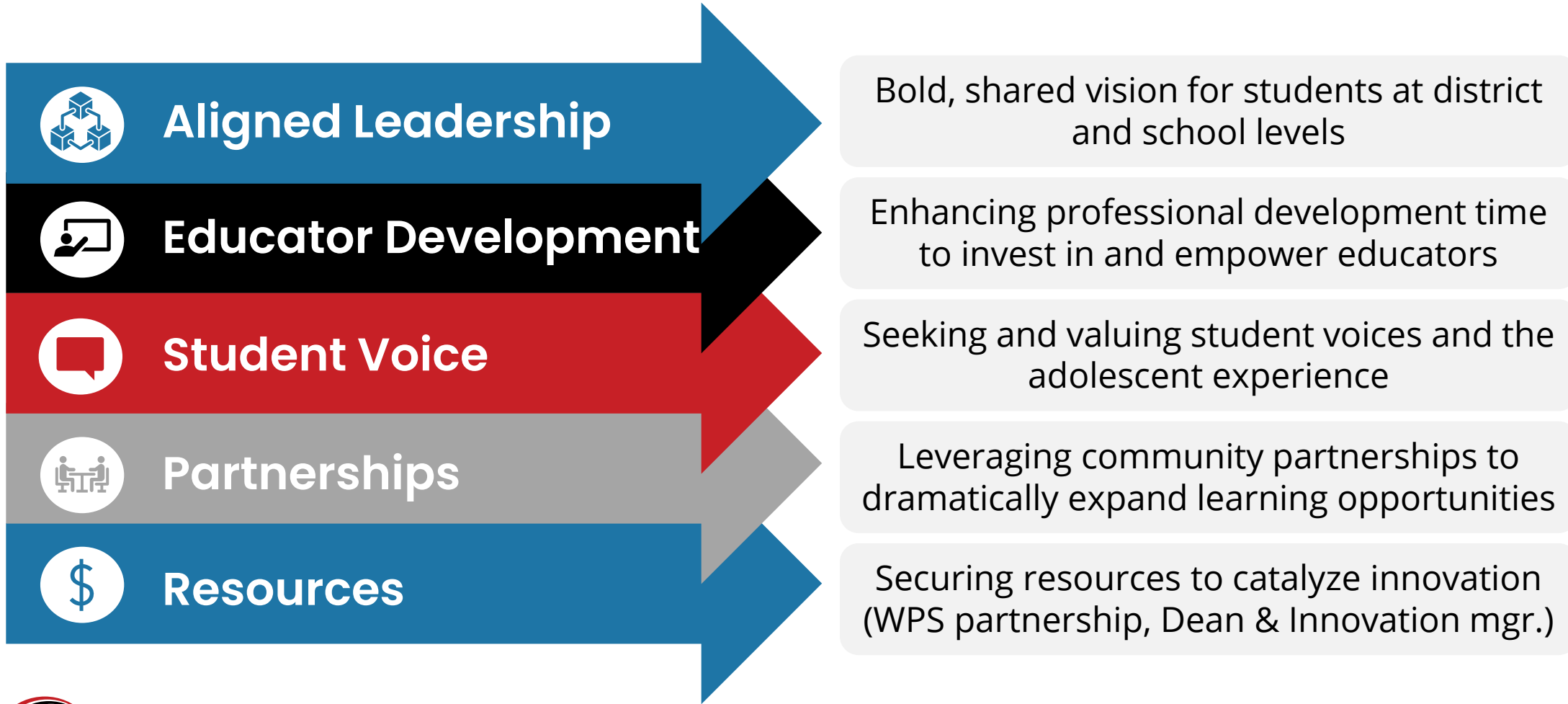


Strong start with all pillars of the middle school experience at both Saltonstall and CMS









Early Lessons: Conditions & drivers of continuous improvement



Where do we still hope to see deeper growth & what's next?

Independent Learners		Still building students' independence and readiness for greater responsibility & rigor, focused on deeper learning
Deeper Partnerships		Going beyond initial partners to build more diverse and personalized partnerships for access & exposure
Student Pathways		Supporting students to develop mindsets, skills, and habits to pursue their interests in high school and beyond
Future Planning		Working across SPS & with WPS to continue the vision for scale & depth of the work

