

PEABODY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

27 Lowell Street, Peabody, Massachusetts 01960

Telephone: 978.536.6500

Dr. Josh Vadala
Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Kelly Chase
Assistant Superintendent

Dr. Mark Higgins
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Community Update and Call to Action

February 13, 2026

Dear Members of the Peabody Public Schools Community,

As we prepare for a much needed February break, I wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on the work of the past year and provide an update on things to come. I hope you and your families are recovering from the snowiest winter we have had in quite some time, and that the February break offers an opportunity to rest, relax, and rejuvenate. As we head toward more daylight and signs of spring, I want to take a moment to thank you for your partnership and collaboration.

The 2025-2026 year has been a year where we have found the need to regroup, heal together, and plan forward for a brighter future. Our work has been made possible by a number of initiatives that have created opportunities for the community to come together in service of the shared goal of building a stronger sense of belonging for all.



Peabody PROMISE

The Peabody Public Schools has partnered with the City of Peabody to form a dedicated team focused on mental health, anti-bullying initiatives, and suicide prevention: Peabody PROMISE. Our goals are to break down barriers to accessing mental health resources, to elevate support for every member of our community, to strengthen the support systems available to our students, families, and educators, and to make a meaningful, lasting impact in the fight against bullying across Peabody Public Schools.

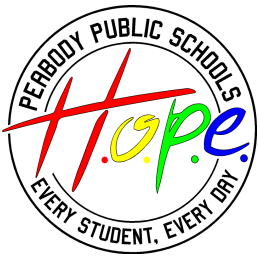
Peabody PROMISE consists of school officials, city leaders, parents, educators, healthcare professionals, law enforcement, and residents working collaboratively to develop actionable and sustainable solutions. Several specialized Action Teams have been created and are actively working on education, communication, events, public outreach, policy review, and school-based structures and resources.

- P** Preventing suicide
- R** Reducing stigma
- O** Offering support
- M** Making meaningful change
- I** Investing in mental health
- S** Standing against bullying
- E** Empowering the community

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Every Student, Every Day.

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Student Resource and Support Center (SRSC) at Higgins Middle School



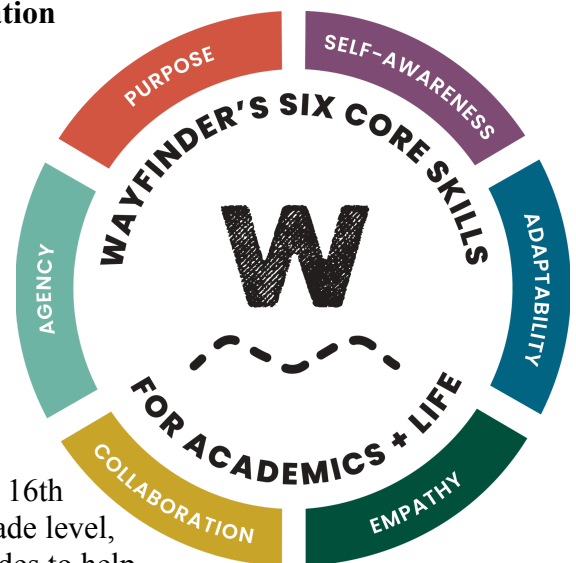
The Higgins Middle School Student Resource & Support Center is a critical resource that will serve our middle school students on-site and in real time. Located on the first floor of HMS, between the main office and the nurse's suite, the SRSC is an incredible resource for our students and their families to promote mental wellness. On-site clinicians who specialize in mental health services for adolescents are available (at no cost) to support students on a wide variety of mental health topics: anxiety, bullying, stress, to name just a few.

The SRSC is open Monday through Friday, and students can access this resource from 8:25 a.m. - 3:20 p.m. with walk-in hours announced daily. Staff members are also able to assist families with making appointments for their student; to speak with a staff member about scheduling an appointment, please call 978-536-4831.

Wayfinder Curriculum Implementation

This past December, the Peabody Promise Curriculum Subcommittee identified the Wayfinder platform for piloting in K-12. The Wayfinder platform provides strong SEL activities and lessons to help students at all grade levels navigate through school and life with a sense of belonging, purpose, and meaning. With the generous support of the Peabody Education Foundation, the goal of bringing Wayfinder to the district became a reality.

Understanding the importance of rolling out Wayfinder this school year, many people quickly came together to ensure a successful pilot. Behind the scenes, our team worked with Wayfinder representatives to develop an implementation plan that included training for all staff at our January 16th professional development day, curated Wayfinder activities for every grade level, created accounts for each staff member, and developed "quick start" guides to help teachers feel confident about logging in and accessing activities.

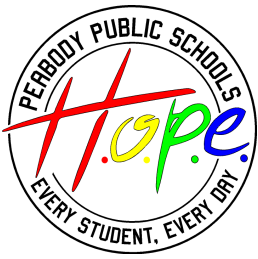


To further ensure smooth implementation with support for teachers, we recruited a team of Wayfinder Helpers, enthusiastic educators from across the district willing to serve as point people for questions, problem solving, and general support. Teachers, counselors, and district and building leaders officially kicked off the

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implementation during the week of January 26th, using activities selected for their grade level and providing feedback along the way to inform future planning. And of course, our terrific Peabody students have brought their positivity to the work. This successful implementation could not have been possible without the collaboration and contributions of all stakeholders, and we are so grateful for the support of so many. For more information on Wayfinder, please visit <https://www.withwayfinder.com/>.

Our Next Call to Action

While we have had a strong start to our work together, we are a work in progress and must continue to collaborate to ensure the success of all of our students. Up until this point, our focus has been on building a supportive environment, ensuring that every student has a trusted adult to whom they can turn for support. Building on this incredibly important work, I invite all members of the Peabody community to join me in the next phase by taking individual action to “Be the Reason Someone Belongs.”

Supported by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the “Be the Reason Someone Belongs” campaign seeks to prevent bullying and promote inclusion and belonging for all, calling on every one of us to actively work toward being a positive force - with kind words, an invitation to join rather than exclude, an offer to help in a time of need, the list goes on. With our continued collective efforts, small daily acts of kindness will have a huge impact on our community. Thank you for your continued partnership and collaboration.

With gratitude,

Dr. Josh Vadala
Superintendent of Schools

