



School Committee Updates Fall 2026

Dr. Michele Shannon, Director of Equity and Excellence



Vision

At Somerville Public Schools, we believe every student deserves the opportunity to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Our work is grounded in the belief that excellence and equity are inseparable—when every student has equitable access to rigorous learning, meaningful relationships, and the support they need to succeed, our entire community benefits.

The Office of Equity & Excellence partners with schools, educators, students, families, and community members to ensure that our district's commitment to equity is reflected in every classroom, every decision, and every student experience. We work to identify and remove barriers to opportunity, strengthen culturally responsive teaching and learning, foster inclusive and affirming school communities, and build the capacity of educators to meet the needs of every learner.

Every Student Learns. Every Class. Every Day.



Equity and Excellence

Listen and Learn

Building a deeper understanding of our schools, classrooms, and student support systems

School Presence

- Visited 100% of SPS schools at least twice
- Participated in principal meetings, common planning time, and school-based professional learning
- Built relationships and developed a deeper understanding of school-based priorities and needs

Tier 1 Instruction

- Observed approximately 50 classrooms
- Established an initial baseline of Tier 1 instructional practice
- Identified opportunities to strengthen equitable access to high-quality instruction

MTSS & Student Support

- Observed Child Study Team meetings in 5 of 10 schools
- Deepened understanding of how students are identified, supported, and monitored within our MTSS framework



Partner, Support & Lead

Strengthening school-based capacity while advancing equity across the system

Partner & Support

- Provided thought partnership to principals on equity-related issues, student needs, and school-based challenges
- Supported learning and collaboration with the SFLC
- Cultivated strategic partnerships with Harvard Graduate School of Education, Youth Guidance, Boston Children's Hospital, and other community partners

Lead Systemically

- Leveraged my role on the Executive Leadership Team to bring an equity lens to districtwide strategy and decision-making
- Began identifying opportunities to align equity, instructional excellence, and MTSS more intentionally across the system



The background is a dark, semi-transparent overlay on a photograph of a desk filled with various school supplies. Visible items include pens, pencils, markers, a compass, a ruler, and some papers. The lighting is soft, and the colors are muted due to the overlay.

Building the Team

School-based Equity Specialists and our work



Vision for Equity Specialists

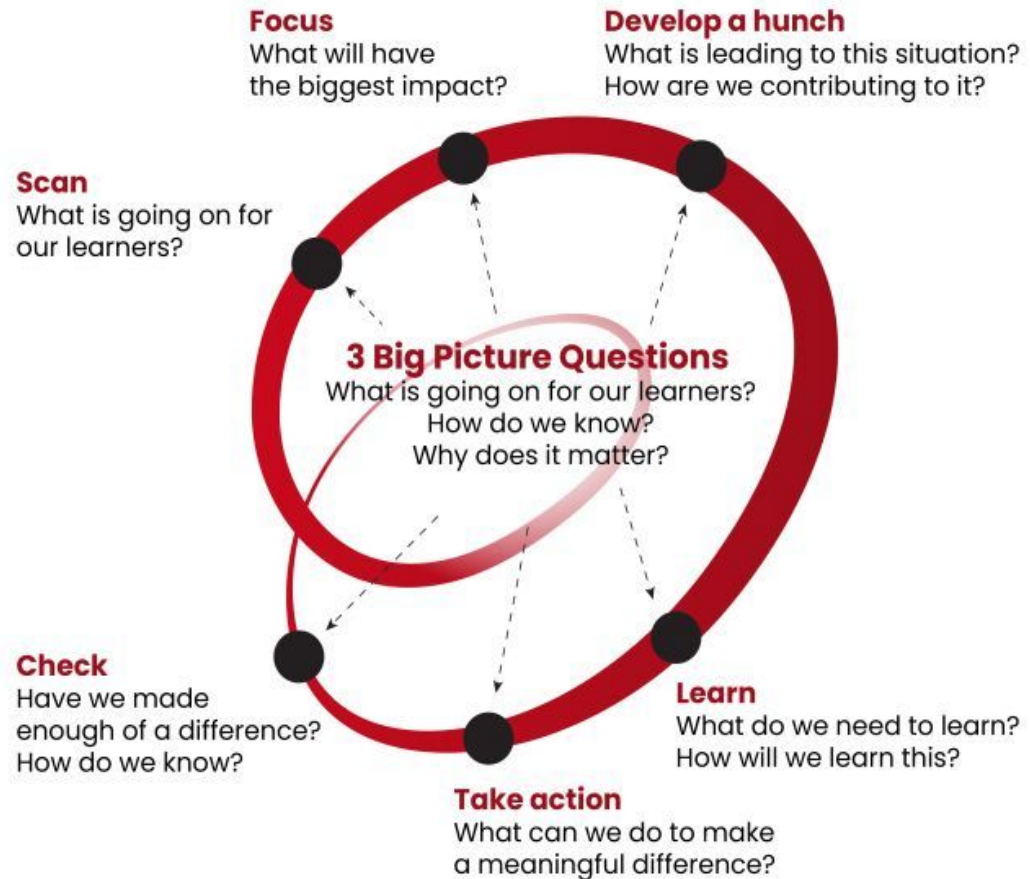
Equity Specialists serve as instructional improvement leaders who partner with school teams to identify inequities, strengthen instructional practice, and improve outcomes for students through continuous inquiry.

- Rather than leading isolated initiatives, Equity Specialists help schools develop the habits, structures, and capacity to make equity part of everyday decision-making.



The Spiral Of Inquiry

Spiral of Inquiry



The Spiral Playbook (Halbert & Kaser, 2017)





MTSS & Equity



Why MTSS & Equity??

MTSS is equity work because it is about ensuring that every student has access to what they need to thrive.

- Our role in Equity & Excellence isn't to own MTSS—it is to make sure that equity is embedded in how we implement it.
- It starts with strong Tier 1 instruction, examining who is and isn't experiencing success.
- Identifying patterns of disproportionality, listening to student voice, and using data to continuously improve our systems.

MTSS gives us a structure for moving equity from an aspiration to a daily practice.



MTSS Priorities

- Provide opportunities for cross-school observations and collaborative communities of support
- Conduct monthly MTSS check-in meetings between principals to review data, systems, and implementation
- Strengthen district infrastructure while building consistency in MTSS implementation across schools
- Establish consistent practices for family and student engagement across the district (systematically listen to students and families to gain critical insight and strengthen systems of communication).
- Develop clear data systems to track progress in CST





First Quarter MTSS Observation Plan

FOCUS AREAS



OUR FOCUS

Build a districtwide understanding of the current implementation of MTSS by observing the core instructional and student support systems in every school.



Tier 1 Instruction

High-quality, grade-level instruction for all students.

WE WILL OBSERVE FOR:

- Standards-aligned, grade-level instruction
- Student engagement and discourse
- Culturally responsive and inclusive practices
- UDL and differentiation within core instruction
- Formative assessment and checks for understanding
- Classroom climate and routines
- Evidence that Tier 1 is meeting the needs of most learners



CST Meetings

Collaborative problem-solving to identify needs and coordinate supports.

WE WILL OBSERVE FOR:

- Data-informed decision making
- Collaborative problem-solving
- Clear entry and exit criteria for interventions
- Progress monitoring practices
- Alignment between identified needs and supports
- Equity-centered discussion of student outcomes



X-Block

Targeted intervention and enrichment for K-8 students.

WE WILL OBSERVE FOR:

- Student grouping based on data
- Evidence-based interventions and enrichment
- Alignment between interventions and student needs
- Protection of core instructional time
- Student engagement during intervention
- Coordination between classroom teachers and intervention staff





Equity and Excellence Fall Update



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