

Dracut

Public Schools

Steven Stone, Superintendent

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, Oct. 22, 2026

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Richardson Middle School Named Spotlight School by New England League of Middle Schools

DRACUT — One of the best middle schools in New England can be found in Dracut.

Justus C. Richardson Middle School has been selected as one of just 25 Spotlight Schools for the 2026-2027 school year, recognizing its strong instructional record and commitment to middle-level best practices.

Dracut Public Schools applied for the honor through the New England League of Middle Schools (NELMS), providing a self-assessment of operations and school-based data. Schools that meet base criteria are visited by two or three evaluators with expertise in middle-level education.

Evaluators interviewed staff, students, and parents, and used a comprehensive rubric to evaluate curriculum, instruction, and the school climate.

Through the process, NELMS recognized that Richardson Middle School is deeply committed to student success and is focused on students' well-being. Through comprehensive instruction and focusing on the whole student, Richardson Middle goes above and beyond for each child's educational growth as they transition between grade levels.

NELMS also highlighted the SST program at the school for students who need additional academic, social, and/or behavioral support, and how effective it has been in caring for students' growing needs.

As a result of the visit and the ongoing evaluation, Richardson Middle School scored a 52.5 out of 54 on the NELMS scale. NELMS took away three key findings from their evaluation: instruction, school climate, and a strong school leadership team.

"We are deeply honored to be named a NELMS Spotlight School. This recognition is a reflection of the hard work, passion, and dedication of our entire school community, our exceptional teachers, supportive families, and, most importantly, our wonderful students. We strive every day to provide an inclusive, nurturing environment where every child can thrive academically and personally, and we are thrilled to see our collective efforts acknowledged," said Principal Maria McGuinness.

"More than a decade ago, the centerpiece of a district-wide grade reconfiguration was the creation of a middle school that embraced the tenets of middle grades education: an emphasis on rigorous, developmentally responsive instruction within small, caring learning communities that foster academic success for all students through strong relationships, collaborative teaching, shared leadership, and meaningful family and community partnerships. Principal McGuinness, along with her leadership team, educators, staff, students, families, and the School Committee, should be congratulated on their commitment to serving Dracut's young adolescents," said Superintendent Steven Stone.

Richardson Middle School will receive a Spotlight School banner and will be able to host visits by other middle schools to model excellence and best practices.

About the New England League of Middle Schools

The New England League of Middle Schools (NELMS) is a nonprofit organization filed under Massachusetts Articles of Incorporation. NELMS strives to offer specific content information, instructional strategies, effective leadership and organizational practices, and problem-solving to its 300 member schools. The organization collaborates with its partners to provide services that support school improvement, positive student outcomes, and the development of solutions for success.

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A message from Dracut Public Schools

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