

# Manchester School District (MSD)

## Procurement Process Efficiency Review

April 10, 2026

### Executive Summary

#### Objective

The objective of this review was to determine whether the Manchester School District (MSD) procurement process for school supplies is efficient and economical, with particular focus on school level purchasing and district approval processes.

#### Scope

The review focused on current-year procurement activity related to school supply budgets and purchasing processes including district-level procurement procedures for supplies, school-level requisition, approval, and purchasing workflows, and budget allocation practices and utilization. This review did not include compliance testing, contract evaluation, or non-supply procurement categories beyond general contextual understanding.

#### Methodology

Fieldwork was conducted through interviews with District administration (Business Office), interviews and walkthroughs at six schools representing elementary, middle, and high school levels, review of procurement workflows within the MUNIS system (process-level only), observation of budget allocation practices and approval structures.

#### Background

At the district level, supply procurement is managed through an annual RFP process. This approach is intended to address price volatility in supply costs and ensure cost control. Each school receives supply budgets that typically include line items for Supplies, Paper, Ink/Toner, Postage, Printing/Binding, Textbooks (replacements), Art Supplies, and STEM supplies. School supply budgets are allocated in three distributions throughout the year, and the total is calculated based on student enrollment.

In addition, other commodities at the district level, also undergo the RFP process such as; (e.g., custodial services (in conjunction with COM), solid and recycling waste, elevator & chairlift maintenance & inspection, technology purchases, special education professional services, school food and nutrition services, other supplies, as well as, auditing services, and benefits consulting services, which are not directly related to a specific schools spending.

All school-level procurement follows a structured approval process:

1. Requisition initiated at school level
2. Principal approval
3. Final approval at the district level

#### Overall Assessment

The Manchester School District has a consistent and controlled procurement framework. School administrators cited minimal inefficiencies in the process; however, operational inefficiencies

exist that impact timeliness, flexibility, and administrative burden. These are primarily driven by centralized approval bottlenecks, budget allocation and timing, and limited budget flexibility at the school level.

## **Key Observations**

### **Centralized approval**

District level approval occasionally creates processing delays and bottlenecks due to final approval authority appears to be concentrated at a single point (CFO level). Due to the workload of this CFO role, delays in order processing, backlogs during peak periods, and reduced responsiveness to school needs were reported occasionally. However, district level approval needs to happen in order to maintain control over purchasing.

### **Budget allocation**

It was noted across schools visited that the budget allocations over three increments lead to uncertainty and delayed purchasing.

- In prior years the later / final allocations have been frozen.

Supply budgets reported by the schools seemed inconsistent with enrollment levels however, upon further review of the district level budget allocation for example, West HS has a budget of \$35,337.89 reduced for the current FY, while Memorial HS with a much higher enrollment has a budget of \$49,676.40 for the current FY which does correlate to the number of students.

### **Non-Rollover of Unused Funds**

Unused funds at the school level do not roll over, revert to the district level. This limits incentive for efficient spending by not stockpiling, reduces ability to plan for multi-year needs.

### **Impact on Staff and Instructional Environment**

Supply budgets allocations have declined dramatically in all schools in recent years, reducing flexibility; a school noted a 44% decrease in two years.

Budget constraints affect:

- Availability of classroom materials
  - Schools “scraping” to meet basic needs
- Ability to respond to instructional needs in real time
- Increased administrative monitoring of remaining balances
- Increased reliance on administrative workarounds

Teachers at Schools have reported spending \$250–\$500 or more annually out-of-pocket for supplies.

### **Procurement execution**

Procurement execution varies across schools, not without administrative burden. A Principal should not be entering and approving in MUNIS – only approving.

- This was perceived as limited training and onboarding availability for procurement processes which was only observed at one of 6 sites visited.
- Potential inconsistency in onboarding and training
- Reliance on informal knowledge transfer

However, thorough training is available through the district on available systems and proper procedures.

### **Best Practices – Positives Observed**

- Consistency of procurement structure
- Annual RFP process supports cost control in a volatile supply market, especially with limited budget.
- Clear separation of student activity funds from school operating budgets
- Strong cost-conscious decision-making at the schools and district level
- The district offers to train any new principal, administrators, or users in MUNIS.
  - *The Finance staff go to the school to train.*
- Equitable budget distribution across all schools based on enrollment.

### **Prioritized Suggestions**

#### **Quick Wins (implement 0–6 Months)**

- Introduce delegated approval authority to reduce bottlenecks, improve cycle times, streamline procurement roles and responsibilities to reduce administrative burden on CFO.
  - Establish secondary approvers at the district level (Business Office)
    - *The district noted that a few months ago they added responsibility to the Assistant Business Administrator to review all school supply orders, and that has reduced bottlenecks and improved efficiency and reduced administrative burden on CFO.*
  - Define thresholds for approval designation
- Publicize standardized school-level procurement procedures for consistency.
  - Issue concise, district-wide procurement procedure guide, standardizing who (role) enters requisitions, (role) approvers, use of MUNIS vs spreadsheets.
- Provide targeted training on procurement systems (MUNIS) and processes to improve processing speed and reduce errors.
  - Short onboarding sessions or tutorial for administrators
  - Development of a quick reference guide
- Improve transparency of budget status; if there will be a freeze on final allocation.
  - Allows for improved planning at school level.
  - Reduced uncertainty.
- Monitor procurement cycle times.
  - Track requisition-to-approval timelines to identify bottlenecks

#### **Structural Improvements (6–24 Months)**

- Reassess true budget needs; by incorporating actuals, reporting of verified teacher needs and personal spending in addition to the actual school spending.
- Implement limited rollover/roll-forward or incentives for efficient spending.
- Implement P-Card, available for emergency purchases even if it is done at the district level for a school.
  - P-Card will also create a revenue stream if utilized at district level as a regular payment method to all vendors (paying no convenience fees)
  - P-Card at the school level could alleviate some burdens when emergencies arise, with proper protocol and training to avoid abuse.
    - *The district is evaluating the possibility of a P-Card program and may consider bringing a recommendation to the BOSOC if it would be advantageous for the MSD.*

**Conclusion**

The MSD has established a consistent procurement framework, including centralized purchasing, annual competitive bidding, and defined approval structures, which is controlled and compliant in structure. The district has taken advantage of opportunities to improve efficiency, reduce administrative burden, and attempts to enhance flexibility, at the school level.

The minor operational inefficiencies noted are outweighed by the prioritized spending controls in place over the limited MSD budget.