Student Opportunity Act Plan

Chicopee

# Commitment 1: Focusing on Student Subgroups

*Student subgroups requiring focused support to ensure all students achieve at high levels in school and are successfully prepared for life.*

* English learners and former English learners
* Students with disabilities
* Low income/economically disadvantaged students
* High Needs students (defined as any student who is economically disadvantaged, has a disability, or is an English learner/former English learner)
* Hispanic or Latinx students

*The rationale for selecting these student subgroups.*

As an urban gateway district in the Commonwealth, the student population of Chicopee Public Schools (CPS) includes a large minority population, 49.1% with the most of this population being Hispanic (39.2% of the total population). 61.8% of our population falls in the 'high needs' category. 53.7% of our population is 'economically disadvantaged.' 18.4% of our population are students with disabilities, 13.5% first language is not English and 6% are English Language Learners. CPS needs to work on several key areas to address the needs of all students in the district.

In reviewing the 2019 Accountability data for the entire district, 50% of all students are making progress towards the state- defined targets. However, it is clear subgroups are not progressing at a comparable rate as the aggregate. These subgroups are making progress at the following rates:

* High Needs: 42%
* Economically disadvantaged: 41%
* Students with Disabilities: 48%
* English language learners: 25%

Analysis of the Community and Staff Surveys have identified Social-Emotional supports as a priority needs throughout the district. Factors that contribute to this area are chronic absenteeism, high discipline rate, an increasing need for mental health services, and a lack of school counselors.

In reviewing high school district data, it is clear that there are subgroups that are not meeting the state average for graduation and that they have higher dropout rates. Looking at 2019 data, our graduation rate for students with disabilities is 68% as opposed to 84.7% for the entire population. This is considerably lower than the state average. The state has a graduation rate of 88% overall and 73.9% for students with disabilities. Graduation rates in 2019 declined for all subgroups, with the exception of English language learners, which has remained stagnant. In addition, 72% of students in the State attend Post- Secondary Education, while only 59% of students in Chicopee progress to Post-Secondary Education.

In reviewing the MCAS Data for Elementary Schools we found that we also are falling behind the State average of meeting/exceeding expectations by 10% in ELA. In Math, the district is falling behind the state average by 8%. While the district has shown growth, CPS still performs below the growth targets in ELA and Math.

In reviewing the MCAS data for High Schools, Chicopee public schools are falling behind the state percentages for accountability for ELA, Math, and Science. The high schools have 47% of students meeting or exceeding expectations compared to the state average of 61% in ELA. The high schools are at 42% meeting or exceeding in Math MCAS compared to 54% state average. When looking at the subgroups we are below the state in almost all subgroups. The largest divide is with students with disabilities. In ELA, 5% of our students with disabilities met or exceeded expectations as compared with 22% of the state and in Math, 8% of our students met or exceeded expectations as compared with 19% of the state. In science, the district is at 60% proficient or advanced compared to 74% state average. Our High School scored a difference of 14 points in ELA and 17 points in Math for meeting or exceeding expectations.

A three-year review of Chicopee Public Schools NWEA/MAP RIT data uncovered a clear gap between the district aggregate data and Hispanic populations. Our CPS Hispanic students have gaps in both Reading and Math. As represented by a 3.8 mean RIT points below the aggregate average on Math and 3.42 on Reading.

After reviewing this data, we summarize the following conclusions:

* Lack of mental health services in the district continues to grow.
* Disparities exist in student subgroups on statewide accountability as early as 3rd grade and continuing all the way through high school.
* In high school, graduation rates and Post-Secondary education are areas of concern, especially for underrepresented groups.

**Commitment 2: Using Evidence-Based Programs to Close Gaps**

The SOA provides an opportunity for Chicopee Public Schools to commit to new initiatives that are driven by district/state data, along with staff and community surveys that identify the needs our district faces in the next several years. The early projection is for Chicopee to receive $4 million extra funds in Chapter 70 state aid for the FY 21 school year. Of those funds, Chicopee shall allocate $1.7 million in year 1 towards evidence-based programs that are identified in this plan. We anticipate deepening these initiatives with incremental Chapter 70 funds in years 2-3.

We intend to use the SOA funds to strengthen the following three (3) areas with a multi-year, sustained commitment to the following priority areas:

* Increase personnel and services to support holistic student needs.
* Expand and improve upon inclusion/co-teaching for students with disabilities and English Learners by reducing class sizes and/or group sizes.
* Start an Early College program at both high schools focused primarily on students underrepresented in higher education.

## Focus Area 1: Increased personnel and services to support holistic student needs (C and/or D)

Students impacted: In year 1 of the plan (FY 21), the district's implementation will affect all elementary schools, 3,152 students, with additional adjustment counselors/social workers at each school. In year 2 (FY22), the district will expand additional adjustment counselors to support the initiative in Middle School/High School that was started in FY 20. For FY 23, the district plans to be able to provide most wrap-around services to support family needs.

* Counseling needs for the district have reached capacity with in-house counselors and outside agencies. At this point, the number of referrals has surpassed the supply from outside agencies.
* In year 1 (FY 21), we will hire an additional seven (7) adjustment counselors that will service all elementary schools in the district.
* As the elementary schools adopt this model of providing expanded in-house services, these positions are intended to address:
  + Provide direct counseling services to students
  + Mental health education PD for staff:
  + Mental health education to students
  + Provide SEL curriculum supports in classrooms
  + Provide behavioral support in the IST process
  + Administer baseline screener to identify student needs
  + Provide embedded support in the classrooms
  + Address Professional development needs to staff

In year 1 (FY 21), to ensure successful implementation of addressing the holistic needs of Chicopee Public School students, each elementary school will have access to two counselors to handle student needs. In the following years, the district will expand this initiative to further address the needs of the Middle and High schools. This would include working with substance abuse, mental health, trauma, and emotional needs.

* To oversee a cohesive Counseling approach in Chicopee, the district will hire a Director of Counseling to ensure that all schools successfully implement a tiered system of counseling, and is supported with appropriate, ongoing levels of professional development.
* To ensure a successful launch in FY 21, three days of in-depth training will be provided in the summer to all counselors in the district prior to the start of the school year.
* To see that counselors can measure effective progress and clearly identify the needs of our students, Chicopee will be using research-based screeners.
* See Appendix A for the breakdown of additional staff to schools

\*NOTE:  Appendix A is not available in this version of Chicopee’s SOA Plan.  Please see plan posted on Chicopee Public Schools website.

Expand Arts/Music in the schools

* Continue to enhance and strengthen art at the elementary level by way of afterschool art and music clubs
* Enrichment activities at the Elementary Level to include visiting artists or field trips. E.g. - Storytelling residency in partnership with a writing program, Enchanted Circle, Bucket Drumming was present in a few of the Schools. To increase the interest in art and music, Artist in residence programs will be offered to each Elementary School.
* A Makerspace after school enrichment club will be offered at both high schools to allow students an opportunity to access STEAM activities that will supplement the classroom experience.

## Focus Area 2: Supporting educators to implement high-quality, aligned curriculum (E and F)

* Ensure that all elementary schools have STEAM labs

The elementary schools have developed a STEAM curriculum guide and a model design to attain at each elementary school in the district, with the needs of each school tailoring its STEAM lab. Students in K-12 will be provided instructional experiences that are hands-on and involve the 4 C's (Creativity, Collaboration, Communication, and Critical Thinking) in the daily process. Modules at the elementary level will include robotics, coding/programming, 3D design, engineering, simple/powered machines, and video game design.

* Middle Schools expand technology offerings to include robotics & coding

Dupont and Bellamy Middle schools will transform their current Applied Science current classrooms into STEAM labs. These new STEAM labs will continue to build upon our student's current STEAM knowledge they received in elementary school while taking a deeper dive into learning robotics, coding, programming, and creative 3-D designs. Students will become comfortable and fluent in 21st-century technology while enhancing and refining their problem-solving skills, developing stronger communication and interpersonal skills, and become prepared to address real-world problems with creative solutions. Robotics, programming, and coding will incorporate the use of LEGO Ev3 Mindstorms, LEGO Spike Prime, and Vex V5 kits. The 3-D design will be addressed through the utilization of Dremel 3-D printers and cutters and Polar Cloud platform and curriculums.

* Build High School capacity in STEAM to prepare students for future jobs Chicopee Public Schools is committed to expanding our STEAM curriculum into all of the high schools. Chicopee High School will continue to advance the STEAM curriculum that students receive in the elementary and middle schools by integrating the STEAM curriculum using the Polar Cloud Platform. The libraries will be updated and expanded into a modern maker space to facilitate the STEAM initiatives. In addition, one computer lab will be redesigned into a 3D printing/Robotics lab in each high school. The existing CADD lab will be updated and used across other curriculums as well. 3-D design will be addressed through the utilization of Dremel 3-D printers and cutters and Polar Cloud platform and curriculums. Classrooms will incorporate 3D printing and other STEAM curricula in a multitude of classes including our CTE exploratory and CTE electives.

A Robotics/Technology club would give students time to access this technology after school.

Chicopee Public Schools will also purchase drones to be used at the high school level to promote technology across the curriculum and increase technical skills.

* It is important the professional development be front-loaded prior to the start of the school year. Additional staff with the corresponding certifications would need to be hired to teach Robotics and other STEAM subjects at all high schools.
* The district will include a Director of Instructional Technology to oversee the growing needs of administrators and teachers at all levels. The district's growth of different devices along with the growth of platforms that work in sync with curriculum, as well as, google classroom needs across all schools needs to be managed. This individual will provide instructional guidance and support to administrators and teachers. The director will be responsible for Google training, along with keeping schools up to date with best digital resources that support the Chicopee curriculum across K-12. In addition, the position will keep with current trends in instructional technologies and advise the district regularly on technology needs.
* CPS will continue the efforts to upgrade and expand the technology capacity Pre K -12. The district suffered a ransomware attack during the 19-20 school year, and has been trying to replace machines that were compromised during the attack, but also the district needs to upgrade machines throughout the district that run on Windows 7 and old projection systems. District and state testing, along with more online curriculum programming have driven the need to expand our current technology inventory in the district.
* CPS currently has been working on replacing the projection systems with interactive flat panels from Lite the Nite technologies. During this 3-year plan, we will be replacing the projection systems at a rate of 40 in year 1, and 35 in years 2 and 3.

With this initiative will come professional development offered by the company to ensure staff is well equipped with the skills to use the functionalities of the LTN panels.

* Chromebooks have become the typical technology device for students to use on a daily basis. In FY 21, we look to add 1500 Chromebooks so that more students have access to these devices during the school day. In FY 22 & FY 23 we will continue to add more Chromebook access for students in classrooms.
* One of the more glaring needs in the district is replacing older desktop and laptop machines. Not only did the ransomware compromise many machines, but the necessary upgrades from Windows 7 to Windows 10 prevented many machines in the district from being used in the schools anymore. The district will invest in 100 teacher laptop machines in FY 21 while continuing to replace/upgrade teacher laptops in FY 22 and FY 23. Computer labs throughout the district, along with administrator desktop machines are needed to be replaced as they age outside the 4-year replacement time. For each year, we will replace 75 desktop stations that satisfy the building requests.

## Focus Area 3: Early College programs focused primarily on students under-represented in higher education (I)

* Students impacted: This program will launch, serving an initial cohort of 100 9th grade students in year 1 (FY21). We expect to expand it to 200 students in year 2 (FY 22), serving 9th and 10th-grade students. In year 3 (FY 23), we will expand it to 300 students serving 9th, 10th, and 11th-grade students. In the 4th year, we will have it fully implemented with 400 students, (100 per class). These numbers will have a significant impact on our overall population. As of 2019, we have 2,219 enrolled in our high schools. If this stays relatively the same, in the fourth year, we will be serving over 18 percent of our population. When recruiting students, we will be laser-focused on recruiting students who have been historically underrepresented in our community. This will include students with high needs, students with disabilities, students who are English Language Learners, and Hispanic students.
* We will develop close partnerships with the four-year colleges and/or the community colleges that are in close proximity to our district. We will investigate the colleges' existing programs and how these programs can collaborate with our leadership team to develop a high-quality Early College Program. We will refer to the Early College Blueprint for Massachusetts and the core model components outlined in the Commonwealth's designation criteria, and we will apply for designation in the spring of 2022.
* Immediately, we will hire a coordinator for the high schools, who are dedicated to Early College Management. This coordinator would work with district administration and building administration to construct a trusted and committed team. They would meet frequently to team build, engage community partners, and develop a communication plan. The team would use the five guiding principles of the Early College designation to begin developing the program. They would assess the program based on these principles and the Early College Readiness Checklist.

Five Guiding Principles

1. Equitable access.

We will make the Early College program accessible to all, focusing on underrepresented students. We will develop criteria based on interest, not necessarily grades. We will work with the middle school guidance counselors to begin increasing family engagement and knowledge of the program. Students selected for the program will not have college classes in 9th grade but will have a focused aligned schedule, that will prepare them to begin college-level classes in the 10th grade. Students will be provided coaching on study habits, academic rigor, and Early College Program expectations. Special programs will be designed to help students prepare for the rest of their high school academics.

Our coordinators in conjunction with our curriculum specialists and our teachers will work with the colleges to ensure that our curriculum is aligned.

All Early College courses will be taught by college faculty or by high school faculty in conjunction with college faculty during the high school day. Students will be offered opportunities to be on the college campus early on in their academics. Older students will take entire courses on the college campus. Buses will take students to and from the college campus when appropriate.

1. Guided Academic Pathways

Beginning in the 10th grade, Early College students will follow a purposefully planned set of courses that will guide them towards a particular pathway. Pathways will be determined based on local needs, existing programs, and job market analysis by the team. Existing pathways and dual enrollment programs will be evaluated to see if they are appropriate for Early College Academic Pathways.

Students will early at least 12 transferable college credits upon graduation from high school.

1. Enhanced student supports

The coordinators along with the high school guidance counselors and the college faculty and staff will encourage students to access support offered to ensure success in the program. The team will develop procedures and protocols to ensure that students understand how, why, and where to obtain support for the rigors of college classes and the program itself. It will be a priority to make sure all students are aware of the support available to the staff and will be proactive in monitoring the progress of each individual student.

1. Relevant connection to career

The district, schools, and the Early College Program will work with the colleges and the community to foster rich experiences that introduce students to careers and opportunities. Connections will include but not be limited to job shadowing, career fairs, local career walks, internships, externships, guest lecturers, capstones, community research projects, and volunteer opportunities.

1. Robust partnerships

Our community is rich with well-established partnerships. Our vocational school works closely with many organizations, businesses, and colleges. All schools work with local community colleges and four-year institutions on a regular basis. Our community leaders are focused on enhancing the collaboration between the city and the schools. The coordinators will work with our career center and our team and administration and the city to reinforce and expand the partnerships that will provide support for the Early College Program.

The Early College team will include subcommittees that will ensure that there is communication among all parties and that there are common goals for the program. The subcommittees will meet regularly and will report out to all involved parties.

Expand career pathways for Criminal Justice, Business, and Early Childhood/Elementary Education at Chicopee High School.

Chicopee High School is in the early stages of developing these three pathways. We analyzed data from the middle schools' college and career surveys to evaluate interest. The data shows a high interest in criminal justice and education. In addition, promoting a relevant practical business pathway that includes cutting edge computer classes, robotics, coding, and other technical skills will be vital for our students in the future. Chicopee High school will need to expand existing course offerings to give students a comprehensive experience that includes rigorous classwork, dual enrollment college classes, and relevant internships. We will need funding to increase staffing, provide college-level classes, more CTE classes, and to purchase equipment that aligns with our pathways.

Coordinator of Career Pathways

As Chicopee High School develops and expands various pathways and expands other career and technical course offerings, the coordinator would be responsible to facilitate all of the programs and to establish, maintain, and monitor the school's relationships with local colleges, community businesses, the school community, and other important stakeholders. The coordinator will ensure that all standards, laws, and regulations by the state and other agencies are fully followed by all teachers. The coordinator will monitor students as they progress through their coursework, obtain various certifications, enroll in college classes, and complete any other requirements needed. The coordinator will assist the Principal in evaluating the curriculum and staff.

## Focus Area 4: Inclusion/co-teaching for students with disabilities and English learners (D and/or E)

Students impacted: Increasing staff to the inclusion/co-teaching model in year 1 (FY21) will impact 3,000 elementary students across 9 elementary schools in the district. In years 2 & 3 (FY 22 & FY 23), the district will continue to support lower student-teacher ratios in the middle school grades by adding additional teachers to work in smaller groups of our neediest students, more specifically the SWD, Low Income, and EL subgroups.

At the elementary level, class size is one factor that plays a part in the district's concerns with our selected subgroups. The 3 largest elementary schools have more than half of classes with average class sizes, 23-27 students. Considering our students with disabilities have been flat-lining or declining in multiple grade levels, the district needs to address the student- teacher ratio to have an impact on student achievement.

In the first year (FY 21), the district will hire eight (8) class size reduction teachers at the elementary level. These positions will lower class size and provide more support in smaller group sizes to our neediest students in the identified subgroups.

Increasing staff to the inclusion/co-teaching model at the high school level will impact the 2,400 high school students. The co- teaching/inclusion model needs to be expanded to include more EL classes, history classes, science classes, and elective classes will provide students with more individualized attention and focus especially in the student with disabilities, Low income, and El subgroups.

The district will add an EL teacher at the middle level to lower teacher-student ratio for our EL students. In addition, an additional EL teacher will be added to the high school level to support the struggling growth of EL students at the high school level.

At the high school level, the district will add three (3) special education teachers to support the inclusion model at the high school level. The district will look at continued support of the inclusion model at the high school level in years 2 and 3.

See Appendix B for the specific breakdown of added staff to schools.

\*NOTE:  Appendix B is not available in this version of Chicopee’s SOA Plan.  Please see plan posted on Chicopee Public Schools website.

Prior to the start of the 20-21 SY, the district will provide a week-long Professional Development tailored to support students with disabilities and our EL learners. More specifically, Professional Development will cover curriculum, academic interventions, behavioral supports, and Social-Emotional Learning supports. Throughout the year, Professional Development will be ongoing to support these areas.

In order to continue to meet the needs of elementary students, grades K – 5 it is necessary to strengthen the intervention programs for our most at-risk students. The district currently has a robust District Accommodation Plan and process for identifying students at risk, as well as identifying students' deficits. This instructional support Team process needs to be strengthened with updated student interventions in the areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics. Scientifically researched-based interventions that systematically address deficits are needed to strengthen this process. In addition, professional development to support classroom teachers and interventionists who implement these interventions needs to continue. Lastly, money is needed to continue the process of ensuring these programs are available at every elementary school, not simply those with larger budgets. The following interventions are recommended:

* Read Naturally –' Live' (grade 1 – intervention grades 1 – 5)
* Word Warm-Ups – (grades 1 – 4)
* Early Reading Intervention (grades K-1)

Our district is currently using the Envision Math Series. This math series offers an intervention program called Success Maker. It is an evidence-based intervention to help struggling students in both Reading and Math through an online program that offers tutorial lessons, places the students on a path based on their performance with multiple learning modalities and allows the Teachers to progress monitor the students' abilities. The student data is compiled for the Teacher to see the students' progress. It is a College and Career Readiness program that addresses the needs of our struggling ELL learners and low performing students. Sixty languages are available to remove language barriers. This program is also accessible at home so students can continue their learning while school is not in session. This adaptive learning model allows the student to work at their level of learning. It is aligned with our current series and the Massachusetts Standards. It is beneficial for the tier 2 & 3 students but also for all students. The program costs are per student starting at $16.00 a student for one year, $28.80 per student for two years. Additional cost for Professional Development would be offered by the district.

Tutoring supports

The high schools need to expand their after school tutoring program to provide more support for struggling students. Teachers in Math, Science, English, and Science, as well as other elective teachers, would tutor students in three days a week after school to decrease failure rates and increase standardized test scores.

The elementary and middle schools will set up after school tutoring programs weekly to provide remedial support for our struggling learners. Set to be twice per week at each school, a teacher will be able to re-teach and/or provide homework support.

The Chicopee Academy will improve the academic growth of their students by expanding current academic intervention resources. The school will offer a social-emotional counseling room to address disruptive classroom behaviors to allow students to return to their academic classrooms.

**Commitment 3: Monitoring Success with Outcome Metrics and Targets**

*Outcome metrics that will be used to measure progress in closing gaps for selected student groups.*

* Student Achievement: Science achievement as measured by average scaled scores (or CPI, depending on grade level) on MCAS
* Student Growth: ELA mean student growth percentile (SGP)
* Student Growth: Mathematics mean student growth percentile (SGP)
* Post-secondary Success: Enrolled in college during the first year after high school
* Custom District Metric 1: NWEA- MAP growth
* Custom District Metric 2: SEL pre/post screener

**Commitment 4: Engaging All Families**

*District plans for ensuring that all families, particularly those representing identified student subgroups most in need of support, have access to meaningful engagement regarding their students’ needs.*

Chicopee Public Schools uses a multitude of programs and services to engage the families of our students. We understand that these efforts need to be streamlined and expanded. We need to incorporate a system at the district and school level that will ensure that all our families have

a voice in the ongoing pursuit of addressing students' needs. Our student subgroups especially need a comprehensive and vibrant system that strives to include them. Students with disabilities, English language learners, low-income students, and Hispanic students need to have access to services and have a voice in how these services are designed and implemented.

Chicopee has always reached out to families through individual school programs to engage our families within their home schools. Our Parent Advisory Council meets monthly, PTO meetings are held monthly at every School, and Parent-Teacher Conferences are held.

We have pockets of success with our district PTO, our English Language Learner Parent Council, and individual PTO's in certain schools. Other successful engagement strategies at the elementary level include school councils, community events such as plays, concerts, and Title I school events. The high schools have successful Freshman orientations and open houses that attract a large number of families.

Although we have strong participation in some areas, we realize that we may not be reaching all of our subgroup families. Therefore, we are proposing to reach out to our families and in particular, focus on those EL and Students with Disabilities with a community survey to gain a better understanding of their needs. Along with this survey, we will be reaching out to our families within their communities.

We will research which programs attract the most families and survey what can make these events more attractive to all families.

We will specifically target our subgroups and determine what they are interested in contributing to and how they feel they can voice their concerns. We pledge to use surveys, social media, and mailings to assess needs and interests. We will also use these avenues to inform families about community events. Throughout the school year, these events will include child care, food and other incentives to increase participation. They will occur at various times and places so that families with small children and/or transportation issues can participate. Translation services will be available at gatherings to ensure accurate communication.

An annual Parent Engagement Feedback Survey (PEFS) will be administered to identify Chicopee Public School's needs for the following school year. In addition, we will maintain records of family participation at these community events and use that data to help drive our community outreach programs in the future.

**Certifications**

*Certification that stakeholders were engaged in accordance with the Student Opportunity Act.*

Chicopee Public Schools partnered with the Chicopee Educators Association (CEA), School Committee, and District administration to lead the efforts to engage the community during the process of getting valuable feedback. Each school PTO, School Council, and Principal Advisory Council (PAC) provided input to identify the areas of greatest need. A forum night hosted by the superintendent gained valuable input from community members about the allocation of SOA

funding. Principal focus groups, department heads, and the school committee also contributed to the process of identifying the needs of the district. A staff survey showed the primary concern areas as being class sizes and social-emotional learning. The community survey echoed the results within the staff survey.

*Certification that School Committee has voted (or is expected to vote on the district’s Student Opportunity Act Plan.*

Date of Approval: 05/04/2020