# Student Opportunity Act Plan: SY 2021-2023

***Alma del Mar Charter School***

# → Commitment 1: Focusing on Student Subgroups

**Which student subgroups will require focused support to ensure all students achieve at high levels in school and are successfully prepared for life?**

While our work in recent years to increase staffing and support for our scholars with disabilities has

yielded gains, these scholars still too often lag behind their peers in academic performance. Likewise, despite outperforming their statewide peers, our English learners are not yet uniformly closing gaps with peers in every grade. Lastly, at a time when the systemic racism embedded in all U.S. public schools creates a burden for all students and in particular our Black and Latino scholars, we know that we have continued work to do to ensure that Alma becomes a truly and proactively anti-racist institution. An example of this work is the work that we’ve done and will continue to do to ensure that our scholars are not overly subjected to exclusionary disciplinary practices. While Black and brown scholars at Alma are disciplined at a lower rate than their citywide peers, they are still more likely to be disciplined at Alma than their white peers. As we work to reopen school amid a pandemic, we are prioritizing the work of ensuring that we mitigate the factors leading to this type of disparate impact in our schools.

In July 2020, we launched a Racial Equity Team, a diverse group of leaders charged with overseeing the long-term transformation of Alma as a truly anti-racist organization. We have hired an outside Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Consultant and are in the process of completing Alma’s DEI strategic plan which will outline priorities for the next several years. Alma’s anti-racist work will be daily, ongoing and never ending.

We are committed to using data to inform us of possible biases in our classrooms. Following our first round of interim exams this fall, Alma staff spent time analyzing their interim data by subgroup to better inform their instruction. Though a majority of our scholars are learning remotely, Alma purchased the Deans List software to ensure that we are well-equipped to track our discipline data by subgroup moving forward.

# → Commitment 2: Using Evidence-Based Programs to Close Gaps

**What evidence-based programs will your district adopt, deepen, or continue to best support the closure of achievement and opportunity gaps? What resources will you allocate to these programs?**

1. **Research-based early literacy programs in kindergarten and early elementary grades (E, F,**

**and G)**

In the fall of 2020 we purchased the STEP literacy assessment system for $45,000. We plan to use this system with all of our K-3 scholars across the network each year; about 300 scholars annually. We implemented our first round of baseline testing in December 2020, and will do two more rounds of testing yet this school year, in March and June 2021. STEP (Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress) is a

research-based formative assessment, data management, and professional learning system designed to build teacher capacity for literacy instruction and provide educators with the data necessary to improve student achievement in literacy across grades K-5, according to this [website](https://uchicagoimpact.org/our-offerings/step).

STEP will provide Alma with a meaningful, developmental literacy assessment that will offer our school leaders and teachers a rich, reliable set of student data. With STEP data, our educators will be equipped to increase the number of students on track to reading proficiency through targeted reading instruction and intervention. We will continue to use the assessment system and accompanying professional development to deepen teacher practice in early literacy and to ensure scholars are making adequate progress, particularly in response to pandemic-related learning loss.

The STEP program will help Alma address the early literacy needs of ***all*** of our scholars. We may use STEP for our 4th and 5th grade scholars who enter those grades not yet meeting grade level targets in reading. Specifically, we anticipate being able to better monitor the progress of our English Language Learners and scholars in Special Education in older grades.

# Diversifying the educator/administrator workforce through recruitment and retention (D and H)

Over the past several years we have increased our staffing to provide greater support to both English learners and scholars with disabilities. Moving forward, Alma is commited to investing the energy and resources necessary to continue to make Alma an anti-racist institution. This includes examining our hiring and talent practices in order to build a staff that reflects the diversity of New Bedford. We know it is critically important that our Black and brown scholars see themselves in their teachers and school leaders. We also know we have a lot of work to do. Currently, only 25% of Alma staff identify as people of color (12% Black, 13% Latinx). Over 60% of Alma scholars identify as Latinx, 20% as white, 13% as Black, and nearly 5% as multi-race.

As we continue to grow out our second campus, we are focused on recruiting more local candidates who, given our city’s demographics, are more likely to be people of color. Along with asking our staff for referrals, we now encourage our families to promote our open teacher jobs as well. In some instances, local candidates may be hired as associate teachers and then developed into lead teachers at Alma.

# → Commitment 3: Monitoring Success with Outcome Metrics and Targets

**What metrics will your district use to monitor success in reducing disparities in achievement among student subgroups? Select from the list of DESE metrics or provide your own.**

1. **DESE Outcome Metrics:**
   1. Student Achievement on English language arts (ELA)
   2. Student Achievement on Math
   3. English Language Learner proficiency

Alma middle school scholars have historically performed better than all other middle schoolers in New Bedford on the state MCAS. However, we strive for our scholars’ achievement to match the best school

districts in the Commonwealth. We are also proud of the past achievements of both our English Language Learners and students with disabilities, and will aim to provide additional support to ensure all scholars achieve at high levels.

# → Commitment 4: Engaging All Families

**How will your district ensure that all families, particularly those representing the student subgroups most in need of support, have the opportunity to meaningfully engage with the district regarding their students’ needs?**

Prior to the Spring 2020 shutdown, Alma staff engaged families in many ways including: Annual Home Visits, Monthly Family Advisory meetings and targeted Special Education and English Advisory Councils, Quarterly Family Conferences, Weekly Town Hall presentations, and biannual Family Surveys. In addition, all families had a direct line to call or message their scholar’s teacher at any time throughout the school year. Since our schools closed in March 2020, we have worked diligently to stay connected with our families, including hosting All-Family Meetings via Zoom at least once per month to give families an opportunity to hear updates on academics, health and safety measures, reopening plans, and available resources in the community. Our team has administered several surveys via Google Forms, in multiple languages, to determine the needs of our families, our families’ views on returning to in-person school, as well as to identify areas of growth in our Remote Learning program. In lieu of traditional home visits, our staff met with 95% of Alma families in September 2020 during outdoors, socially-distanced Orientation sessions. This fall, we shifted Quarter 1 Family Conferences to Zoom and saw a 95% attendance rate.

In an effort to ensure all information is fully accessible by all families, our team has worked continuously to increase the availability of interpretation services at both in-person and virtual meetings. We are also committed to offering all school communications in multiple languages.

It is Alma’s goal to increase family engagement across the network by providing families with various opportunities to connect with one another through our new Families Helping Families initiative. FHF had just launched as COVID hit last winter, but has continued to be an invaluable resource for our families. This fall, our FHF Coordinator began family support groups via Zoom that are facilitated by parent leaders. Several parents and guardians have volunteered to mentor and provide additional support for others in similar situations. We will build out this initiative as our school community grows and as more families learn of the benefits of building relationships with other Alma families.

# Certifications:

✔**By checking here, I certify that our district has engaged stakeholders in our district in accordance with the Student Opportunity Act**

**Please summarize your stakeholder engagement process, including specific groups that were engaged:**

Over the course of this, mostly remote, year, Alma has engaged with our Board of Trustees, Staff, and Families to get input on our program and feedback on how we are prioritizing serving our scholars. This engagement process included online surveys, virtual meetings with space for Q&A, and discussions during Family Orientations. Our focus on creating a more anti-racist Alma, our dedication to creating a more diverse staff, and our commitment to our scholars’ academic achievement are all born out of all of these interactions.

# ■ By checking here, I certify that our district’s school committee voted on our Student Opportunity Plan.

Alma del Mar’s Board of Trustees will vote on this plan on 1/29/2021

# Date of vote: 1/29/2021 Outcome of vote: unanimous approval