Student Opportunity Act Plan

Amesbury

# 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)

*The rationale for selecting these student subgroups.*

Enrollment statistics from this school year indicate that just over 22% of Amesbury students are identified as having a disability that requires special education services. Furthermore, the percent of families identified as Economically Disadvantaged has increased by 5.2% from last school year (23.1%) to a high of 28.3% this school year.

According to the results on the composite measure of DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) for students in Grades K-2, a significant gap exists between the subgroups. The scores indicate that 73% of general education students earned scores at or above expectations compared to 38% for students with disabilities, and 54% of students identified as Economically Disadvantaged. The results are even more discouraging for students with disabilities who are also economically disadvantaged; only 30% earned scores at or above expectations.

2019 MCAS ELA results show similar discrepancies in performance by subgroups, especially for students with disabilities. Less than a third (30%) of SWD and only 9% of students in the SWD and ED combined subgroup were meeting or exceeding expectations compared to 74% of general education students.

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

The largest area of focus this year during collaborative planning work by elementary teachers has been the implementation of a new research-based literacy program to implement in grades K-4 in the 2020-2021 school year; and developing a deeper understanding and skills for teaching language and literacy. Teacher implementation of the previous core reading program, Reading Street, was inconsistent at best. According to staff and supported by an analysis in Ed-Reports, Reading Street did not meet requirements for alignment for text quality, building knowledge, or usability for developing critical language and literacy skills. These concerns with regards to the elementary reading program and need for professional development are shared by stakeholders as expressed during community meetings.

***Focus Area 1:*** Research-based early literacy programs in pre-kindergarten and early elementary grades (E, F, and G)

After reviewing multiple core literacy programs and conducting site visits to other schools; the elementary team has selected Wit and Wisdom as the replacement core literacy program. According to Ed-Reports:

"Wit and Wisdom grades K-4 fully meet the expectations of the indicators of alignment. Engaging and high quality texts are appropriately rigorous and incorporate multimedia options alongside printed texts. The program includes opportunities to apply reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills across a variety of tasks designed to grow students' literacy skills over the course of the year while providing options to differentiate for time where appropriate." Furthermore, an analysis on the CURATE from DESE, the curriculum was rated as meeting expectations for text quality and organization, accessibility for students, usability for teachers, and partially meeting for classroom task and instruction.

In addition to the implementation of Wit and Wisdom the elementary schools are also beginning to implement Geodes, published by Great Minds in association with Wilson Language Training. Geodes is a supplemental collection of accessible, knowledge-building books for emerging and developing readers. Each book enables students to apply decoding skills while learning about important ideas in science, history and the arts.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount: enter number, do not use the****$ character** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **Elementary Literacy Program "Wit and Wisdom"** | **27,375** | **Instructional Materials, Equipment, and Technology** |
| **2** | **Geodes** | **36,950** | **Instructional Materials, Equipment, and Technology** |

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

Implementation of the Wit and Wisdom program requires extensive professional development over the course of the 2020- 2023 school years for all K-4 teachers. Additional professional learning opportunities for staff over the next three years will include the ongoing collaboration between Amesbury Public Schools and the Speech and Language (SAiL) Literacy Lab of MGH Institute of Health, as well as, participation in LETRS (or similar professional learning model) which is a comprehensive course of study that helps translate language and literacy research into effective classroom practice. LETRS helps teachers understand how language, reading and writing are related and presents strategies that are most helpful in improving reading outcomes for all subgroup of students.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount (enter number, do not use the $ character)** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **Professional Development** | **30,000** | **Professional Development** |

**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: English language arts (ELA) achievement as measured by average scaled scores on MCAS
* Student Achievement: Mathematics achievement as measured by average scaled scores on MCAS
* Additional Indicators: Chronic absenteeism (percentage of students missing 10 percent or more of their days in membership)
* Custom District Metric 1: DIBELS
* Custom District Metric 2: NWEA MAP

**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.*

Meaningful family engagement with school faculty and district initiatives is critical to the success of all students in Amesbury Public Schools. In addition to the traditional curriculum nights, parent/teacher conferences, and monthly PTO meetings, the collaboration with our SEPAC has been instrumental in developing family engagement for our families with students in special education. Through a combined effort we have been able to offer free childcare to families when they attend sponsored speaking events on topics such as anxiety, ADHD, and Dyslexia.

We have learned a lot about communicating with families to engage them in the learning process. We have discovered that meaningful engagement with families includes two-way communication (depending on the family) that may be best through an email, a phone call, a google meet, or an in-person conversation to engage them in their child's education.

The community group also believes that families would benefit from a consistent schedule of district sponsored informational and educational sessions, with free childcare, that would be offered to all families. Topics would include; Understanding District Assessments (DIBELS & MAP): What They Measure and What the Scores Mean; How to Build Language and Literacy Skills at Home; Understanding "Go Math" and Other Online Math Resources; DIY (do it yourself) Science Projects for All Age Levels; Helpful Tips for Reducing Stress and Anxiety; and How to Access Community Resources (i.e., public library, recreation department, social services, etc.). A survey will be sent out to all families to identify the topics of greatest interest.

**Certifications**

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

Amesbury Public Schools held a community forum to engage stakeholders in the SOA process. We engaged with a core group that included parents, SEPAC leadership, and school committee members in further discussion. As a district leadership team, we also reached out to the local teachers union, district leadership, and Pettengill House, a social services organization in the community. The primary concerns from this group included access to early college programming for all students, the reading achievement of elementary students, and professional development for teachers focused on language and literacy development.

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

Date of Approval: January 19, 2021