Student Opportunity Act Plan

Ashburnham-Westminster

# 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.*

* Students with disabilities

*The rationale for selecting these student subgroups.*

As noted in our strategic plan, Ashburnham Westminster Regional School District (AWSD) is committed to preparing all students to be contributing citizens of local and global societies in an ever-changing world. However, we recognize that not all student groups have experienced the same level of success to date. Based on a review of our district data, students with disabilities are not experiencing the same level of MCAS outcomes as their peers. On the ELA MCAS tests 17% of SWD grades 3-8 achieved exceeding or meeting expectations compared to 62% of non-disabled students and in grade 10, 23% compared to 81%. On the Math MCAS tests 20% of SWD grades 3-8 achieved exceeding or meeting expectations compared to 59% of non-disabled students and in grade 10, 30% compared to 84%. In addition, the number of students being identified with an emotional disability has increased from 28 in 2010 to 65 in 2019.

We are committing to intensive work to close achievement gaps for this student subgroup and recognize that this important work will take not just the efforts of district staff, but also our families and community.

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

AWRSD believes in educating our students in our own schools in the least restrictive setting possible for their success. Over the last few years, AWRSD has recognized the value of social emotional learning (SEL) to boost academic achievement and to teach important social skills. The district is seeking to expand its SEL Programming to have a coherent programming K-12.

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

In September of 2012, an SEL program was implemented for elementary students with significant mental health and social/emotional needs. An SEL program was added to the high school in 2015. Last year, the district added an SEL teacher and two paraprofessionals at the middle school level to provide a continuum of services K-12. This year we are asking the towns to support the expansion of SEL programming to Meetinghouse Elementary School with a school adjustment counselor to support K-1 students with social emotional needs in adapting to the role of being in various aspects of the school environment. We are also seeking the addition of a school adjustment counselor to the SEL program at Overlook Middle School to support middle students with social emotional needs. A school psychologist will be added at the district level to assess students by observing students, reviewing student records, collecting/analyzing data, researching, reporting to administration. This school psychologist will also consult with students, teachers, other school staff and parents to provide interventions to help students, parents and teachers understand and resolve learning barriers.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount: enter number, do not use the $ character** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **Psychologist** | **78,000** | **Guidance and Psychological** |
| **2** | **Adjustment Counselor** | **78,000** | **Guidance and Psychological** |
| **3** | **Adjustment Counselor** | **78,000** | **Guidance and Psychological** |

***Focus Area 2***: Inclusion/co-teaching for students with disabilities and English learners (D and/or E)

The District is seeking to add two special education teachers to expand SEL programming to the K-1 Meetinghouse Elementary School. These special education teachers will work with classroom teachers in implementing practices which will provide children who have been identified as having social and/or emotional difficulties with equitable, supportive, and welcoming learning environments.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount (enter number, do not use the $ character)** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **Spec Ed Teachers** | **156,000** | **Classroom & Specialist Teachers** |

**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
* Student Achievement: Science achievement as measured by average scaled scores (or CPI, depending on grade level) on MCAS
* Custom District Metric 1: Inclusion Time Data/Return to Class Data

**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.*

The Ashburnham Westminster Regional Schools recognizes that family engagement is critical to ensuring successful outcomes for all students. Given our focus on student subgroups, it is particularly important that we find ways to continue to promote the effective engagement of our families of students with disabilities.

The District will promote family engagement of students with disabilities at multiple levels within the district. One level will address how school personnel will engage in discussions with individual families to address the specific needs of their children. The District will expand upon its home visiting programs to increase dialogue between teachers and families. Staff will assess each family's needs, strengths, and challenges and develop individualized service plans with the appropriate activities to support the family and child. School adjustment counselors will also provide counseling and psycho-social services to children. School-based therapists will meet regularly with school personnel to collaborate on the needs of students. Local clinical mental health providers will be enlisted to provide therapeutic services at the schools to students who have a mental health diagnosis. Frequent clinics will be held with parents of our most intensive needs students to provide updates. Meetings will be held at a variety of times and child care will be provided. Special education staff will work with the SEPAC to educate parents and caregivers through training and workshops on special education matters and issues. A systematic way for communicating with parents will be develop i.e. monthly meeting, newsletters emails.

The district will engage families in overall district planning to ensure family perspectives are incorporated into ongoing district strategies. The SEPAC will meet regularly with school officials to advise them on matters that pertain to the education of students with disabilities and will participate in the planning, development, and evaluation of the school District's special education programs. Programmatic evaluations will be sent home to parents and results will be shared through various communications channels.

**Certifications**

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

Input and recommendations from parents/guardians, community stakeholders, school improvement councils, and educators in the school district was gathered through various means. A community forum and public hearings were held to give community members an opportunity to speak on topics of interest and to comment on expenditures in the FY 21 budget. A meeting was held with SEPAC co-chairs to discuss special education programming and how monies could be allocated to promote the success of the District's students with disabilities. Information about the Student Opportunity Act was presented at Parent Teacher Organization meetings. The input of School Improvement Councils was sought about ways to close the gap in student achievement for students with disabilities. Recommendations from educators and administrators in the district was gathered at Central Administrative Office meetings and school-based faculty meetings.

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

Date of Approval: 03/31/2020