Student Opportunity Act Plan

Athol-Royalston

# 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
* High Needs students (defined as any student who is economically disadvantaged, has a disability, or is an English learner/former English learner)
* White students

*The rationale for selecting these student subgroups.*

In review of the district data the subgroup with the lowest achievement in the district is white, according to the state. In addition, the district has found that there has been low achievement particularly in mathematics at the secondary level. Athol High School received 0/4 points for both the high needs and economically disadvantaged group and only 1/4 point for the white subgroup. Athol Elementary School special education achievement was 2/4 points for achievement in math and 0/4 points in growth. Athol Middle School special education subgroup scored 2/4 in math, ELA and science.

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

Athol Royalston Regional School District had a three-step process for selecting programs. The first step was to request from each individual school what they felt would be needed to improve overall achievement in their buildings. This was done through meetings with principals, teachers and staff. Then the district administrative team reviewed the requests and presented them to the public at a formal meeting. The public then analyzed the requests and submitted their individual thoughts. This list was then prioritized based on district and school data. In many cases community requests and data matched.

***Focus Area 1:***  Inclusion/co-teaching for students with disabilities and English learners (D and/or E)

"In Massachusetts, a student with a learning disability who is educated in a full inclusion setting is nearly five times as likely to graduate on time…" (DESE Guidebook for Inclusive Practice). To facilitate inclusion, ARRSD seeks to build the capacity of special education and general education staff by providing real time coaching and support from Special Education Facilitators.

In the 2017 American Institute for Research (AIR) Report, one of the most effective strategies to support students with disabilities is to "build staff capacity to meet the needs of SWDs." The report goes on to further state "successfully meeting the needs of SWDs hinges on a school staff's collective ability to understand and respond to those needs with appropriate supports. As such, an important strategy the seven exemplar schools used to improve interventions for SWDs involved enhancing the teaching staff's expertise in serving these students. In particular, the schools emphasized the need for teachers who serve SWDs to possess deep knowledge of the academic content they are teaching along with a nuanced understanding of how to make that content accessible to students with special academic, linguistic, and/or behavioral needs."

In our current model, special education teachers rely heavily on their Assistant Principals for support, who are not necessarily trained special educators. In this model the district seeks to implement a model that would build teacher capacity and improve student outcomes using experts in the field of Special Education. The district proposes hiring two Special education facilitators and two teacher leaders. These individuals will have expertise in inclusion practices so that they can work with the special education and general education staff in their instruction of special needs students in inclusive classrooms. The two teacher leaders will support the two district schools that will not be assigned facilitators.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount: enter number, do not use the $ character** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **2 Special Education Facilitators** | **190,000.00** | **Instructional Leadership** |
| **2** | **Lead teachers** | **10,000.00** | **Instructional Leadership** |

***Focus Area 2:*** Strategies to recruit and retain educators/administrators in hard-to-staff schools and positions (D)

The text "Catalyzing Change in High School Mathematics" written by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics states "Excellence in mathematics education requires equity-high expectations and strong support for all students". Using a model of leveled classrooms does not work. The text further states, we must have teachers who are effective.

The program the district believes will help to build our math program at the secondary level is a two-prong approach.

Hiring four Teachers-in-Residence who will work directly in math classrooms for Algebra and Geometry, the base courses for entry into higher math classes. The Teachers-in-Residence would be college students in their last year of schooling. They would do their student teaching for a year in these classes with onsite support from the math consultants from Lesley University. Each week the Teachers-in-Residence and the core math teachers would be observed by the Lesley consultant and would take part in a planning session for their classes. The Teachers-in-Residence will provide tutoring time for students during the day and after school. Each Teacher in Residence would receive $9,500.00 towards their college costs during the school year and priority for hiring at if a position should open at the end of the school year.

The district will work directly with Greenfield Community College to offer college courses in math at the high school, allowing our students to get college credit. This will also allow our teachers to grow their content knowledge as we will have these teachers in the class with the students and will provide supports to students on the days the professor is not in.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount (enter number, do not use the $ character)** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **Teachers in Residence** | **38,000.00** | **Other Teaching Services** |
| **2** | **College Courses** | **12,400.00** | **Other Teaching Services** |

**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: Mathematics achievement as measured by average scaled scores on MCAS
* Student Growth: Mathematics mean student growth percentile (SGP)
* Additional Indicators: Percentage of 11th and 12th graders completing at least one DESE-identified advanced coursework
* Custom District Metric 1: Benchmark TESTING Math
* Custom District Metric 2: Subgroup Data MCAS Special Education

**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 facilitator's positions we are putting into place will be responsible to attend students IEP meetings and outreach work with families as they let the department know. Also, schools are putting together a family engagement plan to outreach to families of students who are not performing in mathematics. These plans will be completed this summer.

**Certifications**

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

The district held a family engagement night at Athol Royalston Middle School. Prior to the meeting, a letter went home to all families requesting their presence or having them send in their thoughts. The SEPAC for the district was particularly invited along with non-profits and town councils to make sure they could give advice. The meeting took place on February 25, 2020.

Principals met with their faculty and staff prior to this meeting to discuss the needs of their individual buildings. They submitted their thoughts to the district and the recommendations were sent out to the public prior to the meeting. Also, principals met with each of their school councils before the public meeting. Their recommendations were included in the list sent from each school.

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

Date of Approval: 03/18/2020