**Student Opportunity Act Plan: SY 2021-2023**

***Berkshire Arts & Technology Charter Public School***

**Commitment 1: Focusing on Student Subgroups**

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

Berkshire Arts & Technology Charter Public School (“BART”) is a regionally-based school with an administration, faculty and staff, and Board of Trustees dedicated to the proposition that each child who is a student at BART can achieve great things and can enjoy success in college. While we are committed to ensuring programming and an environment that meets this goal for all of our students, we recognize that not all students have had the same level of success, with gaps of varying size in MCAS performance generally between BART’s Caucasian, non-special-education students and students of color, low-income students, and special education students. There is occasional overlap between some of these subgroups, although we at BART have been working in the last years to reduce the gaps in achievement with the goal of eliminating them. We rely on data derived from MCAS and other formal assessment means (such as results derived from our participation in the Achievement Network [ANet]) as well as surveys of students and families.

BART is a total-inclusion school with no students in substantially separate programming. Our student population is quite diverse (more than 30% are students of color), nearly half of our students are from financially disadvantaged homes, and more than 30% of the students have individual education plans, 504 plans, or require other special support. Our employee population is nowhere near as diverse, however, with only roughly 5% being educators of diversity. We are undaunted to the commitment to reduce and eventually eliminate the achievement gaps and recognize that this work is tied intimately to our continuing effort to diversify our employee population. Indeed, both significant reductions in achievement gaps and significant increases in community diversity are strategic objectives within two strategic goals of our 5+ year strategic plan (“Scaling the Mountain: A Strategic Plan for 2019-2024”); the success of our efforts in these objectives depends on the joint efforts of all members of our BART community.

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

**What evidence-based programs will your charter school adopt, deepen, or continue to best support the closure of achievement and opportunity gaps? What resources will be allocated to these programs?**

BART exists on and functions according to a set of six foundational elements:

* A liberating, college-preparatory, academic environment that provides for students and employees alike intellectual challenge, professional development and exploration, and personal growth;
* Dedication to the education of the whole child that supports the child’s intellectual, emotional, social, and physical maturation;
* A school that embodies the best of contemporary educational knowledge, thought, and practices, including a reliance on data-driven teaching and learning in support of advancing student achievement;
* A vibrant, inclusive school that embraces diversity and individuality yet shines by the devotion of students, faculty and staff, and families to their BART and home communities;
* An educational experience that brings the world into BART and BART into the world; and
* A strong, resilient, and multi-element financial base from which resources will enable students’ academic success and professional distinction and employees’ professional development and refinement.

For nearly twenty years, the School, including its faculty and administration, has employed data in ever-increasing ways—from use in addressing needs of the School as a whole, to those of student subgroups, to those of individual students. Our intent is to continue that with the addition of critical new initiatives as well as enhance programs we already have begun.

1. Acceleration Academies and Summer Learning for Middle School Students

We have found afterschool enrichment programs have a profound effect on student engagement and learning. We wish to extend and enhance our afterschool/out-of-school endeavors with additional programming during the school year. We also wish to establish a summer learning and enrichment program. Several years ago, BART managed a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant; that enabled us to program significant in-school and out-of-school activities for a significant fraction of BART’s student population. That experience demonstrated how powerful nearly year-round engagement with our students can be, particularly for students in the subgroups for which we have identified achievement gaps. The foundational costs for transportation required to serve our vast, diverse geographic area (e.g., some students are nearly an hour away by bus) are *essential* if the School is to realize a year-long BART learning academy that joins together after-school and summer enrichment programming.

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| **FY21 budget item** | **Amount** | **Foundation Category** |
| Afterschool/Academy Teachers (2) | $350,000 | Classroom & Specialist Teachers, Employee Benefits / Fixed  Charges |
| Academy Food | $22,000 | Pupil Services |
| Academy Transportation | $67,750 | Pupil Services |
| **Evidence-based program identified by the Department:** | | Targeted Student Support: Acceleration Academies and/or  summer learning to support skill development and accelerate  advanced learners |
| **SOA program categories:** | | A (expanded learning time) and E (PD) |

1. Diversifying the Educator/Administrator Workforce

BART has the most diverse student population in Berkshire County, with well more than 30% of our students contributing racial and ethnic diversity to our school community. Our employee population is not nearly as diverse, however, and we believe that this discrepancy contributes to lower student success among our students of color. To address this, we have taken programmatic steps that will help us begin to diversify our workforce. One of the four strategic goals of BART’s 5+ year strategic plan is enhancing the “diversity of community” for the School; included within that goal are objectives and actions such as establishment of teaching fellow positions for teachers of color, establishing a program of mid- and long-term visitors who will enrich our academic program, and making even more robust a program of professional development on topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We will apply SOA support to each of these initiatives as well as offering attractive incentives for faculty and staff members to continue their education and professional training.

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| **FY21 budget item** | **Amount** | **Foundation Category** |
| [Diversity] Teaching Fellows | $250,000 | Classroom & Specialist Teachers, Employee Benefits / Fixed Charges |
| Mentor Stipends for Teachers | $20,000 | Professional Development |
| MTEL Test Preparation Grants | $5,000 | Professional Development |
| Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Professional Development | $15,000 | Professional Development |
| Continuing Education | $25,000 | Professional Development |
| **Evidence-based program identified by the Department:** | | Talent Development: Diversifying the Educator and Administrator  Workforce |
| **SOA program categories:** | | D (hiring school personnel) and H (diversifying the workforce) |

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

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

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| 1. **Department outcome metrics:**    * Improved ELA achievement for subgroups    * Improved ELA mean SGP for subgroups    * Improved Mathematics achievement for subgroups    * Improved Mathematics mean SGP for subgroups    * Improved 3rd semester college persistence rate | **2) Custom metrics:**   * + Enhanced student engagement (measured by student participation in afterschool and summer programming)   + Improved family satisfaction (measured by responses   to student-engagement questions in annual family  surveys) |

These metrics will both directly and indirectly measure our success in reducing opportunity and achievement gaps for BART’s students of color, students from low-income families, and special education students. Improved performance by students in the subgroups on formal, objective assessments such as MCAS ELA and Mathematics tests, and improvements in mean student growth percentiles will be direct indications that our afterschool and summer engagement initiatives are helping students. Increased participation by students in these initiatives’ programs, as well as families’ increased satisfaction in their children’s BART experience, will be indirect measures.

We are also confident that the continuing diversification of our employee population, particularly in regards to recruiting and retaining teachers of color, will directly positively affect our diverse student population. And these positive effects we think will be reflected in further reductions in achievement gaps for the student subgroups.

**Commitment 4: Engaging All Families**

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

We at BART understand that our students’ success is connected fundamentally to the engagement of all of us—teachers, families, staff members, administrators, and Trustees—in their intellectual, emotional, and physical growth and maturation. We also understand that improving that engagement means improving our students’ success.

BART’s geographical location means that, for the vast majority of our students, the School is not near where the students live. Indeed, 80% of our students arrive daily at the building (outside of this time of the pandemic!) by bus, some traveling for nearly an hour from their homes to reach us. This means that family engagement is particularly challenging and that we who work at BART must endeavor to improve how we reach and involve our students’ families in the students’ education. To do this, we approach family engagement in multiple ways: our families are formally engaged by our Community and Family Advisory Council (CFAC), which two years ago began having meetings at BART as well as at locations in our students’ home communities; rather than parent-teacher conferences, twice each year, each student is responsible for conducting a meeting that brings together their parents/guardians and teachers to discuss the student’s progress; our faculty is in direct and regular contact with their students’ families regarding the students; BART sponsors for students and their families special programs that bring the families to BART or BART to locations near the families (examples include enrichment lectures and performances as well as workshops on topics such as student college applications and completing college financial aid forms). During the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, certain teachers and staff members have also conducted home visits to check on students and to deliver food and instructional materials. We intend to explore how we might begin a formal program of in-home visits to strengthen family engagement, particularly for our student subgroups.

**Certifications:**

* **By checking here, I certify that our charter school has engaged stakeholders in our community in accordance with the Student Opportunity Act**

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

Just prior to passage of the Student Opportunity Act, BART conducted a fifteen-month strategic planning process. The 5+ year strategic plan that emerged from that was due to a community-wide engagement on the broad topics of where BART is and where BART should go in the future. Families, community leaders, students in each of BART’s 6th through 12th grades, teachers and staff members, alumni, CFAC families, and friends of the School—all participated in small-group discussions, targeted planning groups, surveys, and individual meetings. Apparent to all was that BART must address the lack of diversity of its faculty and staff; families of students expressed great concern about this. Also clearly articulated was a desire that BART provide more afterschool (and summer, if possible) enrichment opportunities for middle school students.

* **By checking here, I certify that the Berkshire Arts & Technology Charter Public School’s Board of Trustees voted on our Student Opportunity Act Plan articulated herein.**

**Date of vote:** March 3, 2021 **Outcome of vote:** Unanimous Approval