Student Opportunity Act Plan

Billerica

# 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
* African American/Black students
* Hispanic or Latinx students

*The rationale for selecting these student subgroups.*

Where we have seen academic gaps as reflected in MCAS, is among the subgroups of economically disadvantaged students. Specifically, we saw gaps in grades 3 through 8 among students of color, economically disadvantaged students, SWD's and EL's.

For example, on the 2019 MCAS, there were differences in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations.

* 15% of SWD's met or exceeded expectations on the 2019 ELA MCAS compared to 65% of Non-SWD's.
* 17% of EL's met or exceeded expectations on the 2019 ELA MCAS compared to 54% of Non-EL's.
* 41% of economically disadvantaged students met or exceeded expectations on the 2019 ELA MCAS compared to 57% of Non-economically disadvantaged.
* 43% of African American students and 43% Latinx students met or exceeded expectations on the 2019 ELA MCAS compared to 55% of white students and 66% of Asian students.
* 13% of SWD's met or exceeded expectations on the 2019 Math MCAS compared to 59% of Non-SWD's.
* 23% of EL's met or exceeded expectations on the 2019 Math MCAS compared to 49% of Non-EL's.
* 33% of economically disadvantaged students met or exceeded expectations on the 2019 Math MCAS compared to 53% of Non-economically disadvantaged.
* 34% of African American students and 37% Latinx students met or exceeded expectations on the 2019 Math MCAS compared to 48% of white students and 72% of Asian students.

In grade 10, we saw gaps between SWD's, students of color, and economically disadvantaged students. For example, on the 2019 MCAS, there were differences in percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations.

* 24% of economically disadvantaged students met or exceeded expectations on the 2019 ELA MCAS compared to 74% of non-economically disadvantaged students.
* 18% of SWD's met or exceeded expectations on the 2019 ELA MCAS compared to 73% of non-SWD's.
* 43% of African American students and 58% Latinx students met or exceeded expectations on the 2019 ELA MCAS compared to 68% of white students and 91% of Asian students.
* 32% of economically disadvantaged students met or exceeded expectations on the 2019 Math MCAS compared to 70% of non-economically disadvantaged students.
* 9% of SWD's met or exceeded expectations on the 2019 Math MCAS compared to 71% of non-SWD's.
* 23% of African American students met or exceeded expectations on the 2019 Math MCAS compared to 63% of white students and 96% of Asian students.

However, we do not see the same gap among Latinx students, where 67% of Latinx students met or exceeded expectations.

In Grade 10, the population of EL students was too small to be a reportable subgroup.

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

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

The district uses a research-based balanced literacy curriculum and instruction in the early elementary grades. This balanced literacy program has roots in the readers' / writers' workshop and includes the development of foundation pre-reading and reading skills, starting in kindergarten. This early literacy program is a tier 1 program that serves to respond to the varying needs of EL's and SWD's. Student progress is measured through the Benchmark Assessment System to determine students' reading levels and growth in literacy.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount: enter number, do not use the $ character** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **Benchmark Assessment System Kits** | **5000** | **Instructional Materials, Equipment, and Technology** |
| **2** | **Books for Classroom Libraries** | **15000** | **Instructional Materials, Equipment, and Technology** |
| **3** | **Professional Development with TLA** | **80000** | **Professional Development** |

## Focus Area 2: Increased personnel and services to support holistic student needs (C and/or D)

We hire support staff with the aim of providing a wide-range of supports for students. In addition to our building-based counseling staff and social workers, the district's Social Emotional Learning Support Specialists work directly with teachers to build their capacity for supporting students' social and emotional learning. The district has also added two Community Outreach Social Workers who act as a liaison between schools and families for students who struggle with attendance and school engagement, and who help connect families to external community resources.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount (enter number, do not use the $ character)** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **(4) Social Emotional Learning Support Specialists** | **333481** | **Other Teaching Services** |
| **2** | **(2) Community Outreach Social Workers** | **172720** | **Pupil Services** |

Focus Area 3: Strategies to recruit and retain educators/administrators in hard-to-staff schools and positions (D)

The district mentoring program is designed to increase staff retention, particular for hard-to-staff positions. This program includes matching new hires with mentors and meeting monthly on topics chosen to respond to the needs of new teachers. We monitor the retention rates of ESL teachers and special education teachers as staff who work with these vulnerable populations. With this effort, the district will also be pursuing strategies to recruit and retain educators that are more reflective of the racial diversity of our student population

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount (enter number, do not use the $ character)** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **Mentor stipends for educators** | **50000** | **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
* English Language Proficiency: Progress made by students towards attaining English proficiency (percentage of students meeting annual targets calculated to attain English proficiency in six years).
* Custom District Metric 1: Benchmark Assessment System: Reading levels for early literacy
* Custom District Metric 2: iReady and MAP Assessment Data: Student progress in ELA and Math

**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 Billerica Public Schools recognize the importance of family engagement in ensuring successful outcomes for our students. With our focus on student subgroups, it is important that we focus on ways to engage our families of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, EL students, and SWDs.

To support this work, the district hired a Family and Community Outreach Specialist, who works with our Assistant Superintendent to coordinate family engagement efforts in the district. The district has established a Family Engagement Group with representatives from each of the district's PTOs, and has the goal of increasing family involvement in all of the schools, particularly among populations that are not historically represented in our PTOs. In addition, district leaders meet regularly with the district's Special Education Advisory Council to jointly plan educational opportunities for families in order to support their children's learning. The district also employs Community Outreach Social Workers, who work to connect families to educational and other community resources outside of the school setting.

**Certifications**

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

The Billerica Public Schools worked to collaboratively engage stakeholders through a variety of established district groups. The Student Opportunity Act was discussed at multiple meetings of the Billerica School Committee, with members of the public encouraged to speak at public comment. Discussions about the SOA were held with the district's Family Engagement Group and the Billerica Special Education Parents Advisory Council, where feedback was actively sought. Educators were engaged in the process through both conversations with the leadership of the Billerica Federation of Teachers, as well as group meetings with individual teachers. Common themes of feedback included the need for more inclusive practices to support special education students, and the need for more social-emotional support for students

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

Date of Approval: 2/8/2021