Student Opportunity Act Plan

Brockton

# 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.*

* First language not English students
* English learners and former English learners
* Students with disabilities
* Students not meeting Grade-level Expectations

*The rationale for selecting these student subgroups.*

English Language Learners – Brockton is proudly home to among the most culturally diverse student populations in the state, with students representing 47 different countries of origin. The Brockton Public Schools takes a tiered approach to programming for our English Language Learners which factors in a student's level of proficiency and their native language needs.

Students who receive Special Education Services – Nearly 17 percent of the district's student population is classified as students with disabilities. In accordance with guidelines from DESE, BPS has worked hard throughout the pandemic to ensure students have received the services documented in their IEPs regardless of learning model while still abiding by the current health and safety requirements.

Students not meeting Grade-level Expectations – BPS teachers and school leaders are constantly evaluating student performance against skills that a student should master by the end of the school year. Standards can be state-based or even created at the district level. These standards apply to all students at a given grade level.

For any initiative, curriculum resource, or professional development to have an impact on student achievement, structures need to be established to support teachers.

Recommendations

The Brockton Public Schools intends to utilize funds received via the Student Opportunity Act to bolster data-driven strategies that most effectively support these subgroups. More specifically, the district intends to improve academic outcomes for students who receive Special Education services by ensuring that all students with disabilities have access to the least restrictive environment. Additionally, we intend to improve academic outcomes among our English Language Learner population by ensuring students are effectively integrated into general education classrooms and have access to requisite supports.

Taking this into consideration, the district recommends the following:

* An increase in inclusive practice, for example co-teaching, for English Learners, Special Education students and students not meeting grade-level expectations will lead to improved student achievement and engagement, thus narrowing our subgroup's achievement gap.
* We must increase personnel and services in order to support the full needs of the aforementioned subgroups. This focus will ensure that students are supported in a holistic manner consistent with academic, intervention, enrichment, and wraparound services.
* We must intensify our responsiveness in supporting educators in their execution of high-quality aligned curriculum.
* We will continue to identify and address inequities in discipline through the continued implementation of positive behavioral approaches across the district. • An investment in school facilities will provide all students with a safe, healthy and welcoming learning environment.

At the elementary level there are promising structures that have alignment from the state, to the district, to the school, to the classroom. Similar structures are present at the middle and high school level. Unfortunately, these structures have suffered due to the loss of funding over the last several years. We look forward to utilizing SOA funds to rebuild them. Teachers receive current, research-based information on content and pedagogy because of these structures. They are supported in the implementation and fidelity of resources and practices.

Standards for high-quality teaching can be calibrated throughout the district. Through strategic planning, we will look at the most successful models that work at each grade level. More specifically, we are examining replicating the elementary instructional coach model at the middle and high school levels. Additionally, we are exploring how to replicate the middle school associate principal of curriculum and instruction model at the elementary school level. Brockton High School had an associate principal position that was cut four years ago. That position needs to be restored.

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

The BPS Successful Planning Model focuses on:

* Evidence-based development.
* Selection of evidence-based programs and the resources that are allotted to those programs
* Implementation – keep plans to a similar length as the sample template.

Evidence-based program #1: Research-based early literacy programs in PreK and early elementary grades along with expanded access to full-day, high-quality PreK for four-year-olds.

Evidence-based program #2: BPS believes to prevent learning gaps we need to strengthen literacy instruction starting with our youngest students in PreK-2.

Research has shown that learning to read is not a natural process. Written language is a code. Teaching young students how to crack the code- teaching systematic phonics- is the most reliable way to ensure they learn how to read the words. Knowing how to decode is an essential first step. If a student cannot decode, it does not matter how much background knowledge or vocabulary they possess. They will not be able to lift the words off the page. Conversely, if a student can decode but does not possess any background knowledge, they will not comprehend the words they can read. Reach for Reading teaches content and will give students any opportunities to develop background knowledge. To supplement systematic and explicitly taught phonics we have implemented Fundations.

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

Recommendations We will utilize evidence-based programs to close gaps in two ways:

* We will deepen the use of our standards aligned, high-quality curriculum.
* We will expand early childhood opportunities

Teachers must meet the needs of diverse learners by using strong instructional practices that differentiate instruction. Our goal is to improve student outcomes by implementing a comprehensive approach to early literacy programming.

We will accomplish this by:

* Providing ongoing professional development for teachers and support staff.
* Launching a co-teaching model over time and expand inclusion/co-teaching for students with disabilities and English learners.
* Identifying and using valid, reliable early reading assessments to monitor students' progress and identify at-risk students so we can quickly provide targeted interventions. We will support educators to implement high-quality aligned curriculum.
* Increasing personnel and services to support holistic student needs.
* Improving facilities to create healthy and safe school environments.

Best Past Practices and Historical Facts

Two years ago, the Brockton Public Schools made a research-informed decision to change the kindergarten entry date. Now, all students who enter kindergarten must be 5 on or before August 31. In the past, our incoming kindergarten students started school as early as four years old and some students did not turn five until December 31 of that school year. We changed the entry age over a two-year period, rolling back the entry date from December 31 to November 1 and the subsequent year from October 31 to August 31. We did, however, grapple with the fact that some of our students who would have been eligible for kindergarten, did not have access to a PreK program.

BPS has limited opportunities for PreK, other than integrated Special Education programs, so we added four half-day sessions in September 2018 specifically for those students born between November 1 and December 31. After listening to feedback from the families and teachers and after conducting an analysis of attendance data, it was decided to convert two existing half-day sessions to one full day session. The success of the full-day model informed the decision to expand full-day PreK classrooms.

In Year One (FY22)

BPS will open four additional PreK classrooms and we will focus on strengthening Tier 1 literacy instruction in PreK-2 districtwide, placing emphasis on job-embedded professional development. With support from instructional coaches, teachers will learn strategies for scaffolding the curriculum to meet the needs of diverse learners. Specifically, the addition of English Second Language (ESL) and Moderate Special Needs (MSN) teachers will allow us to phase in a co-teaching model of instructional support. This model will be strengthened through a partnership between the Office of Learning and Teaching, the Bilingual Office and the Special Education Office. We believe this cohesive and aligned instructional model supports students and teachers alike, and everyone will benefit from this evidence-based approach.

After the curriculum implementation year we will focus on researching, selecting and utilizing appropriate interventions. Teachers will receive training on effective Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. A consistent schedule and process for data analysis will be implemented at each PreK site and be led by the instructional coach.

The district has committed to assigning paraprofessionals to every PreK and kindergarten classroom. To ensure that the paraprofessionals are well-poised to support student learning, the district will provide ongoing professional development in the areas of culturally responsive teaching and best instructional practices in early childhood literacy and assessment, which parallels professional development that teachers will receive over the next three years.

Students Impacted

* In Year 1 (FY22) BPS will open four new general education full-day PreK classrooms and convert one existing PreK classroom from half-day to full-day at the Arnone School. The additional classes will be located at the Downey and Hancock schools.
* In Year 2 (FY23) an additional four classrooms will open.
* In Year 3 (FY24) we will add an additional four full-day PreK classrooms. At the end of a three-year period we will have 280 seats available for PreK. Cumulatively, over a three-year period we will provide access to 320 students in PreK.

As early as 2015, the district participated in a preliminary fact-finding initiative to explore the expansion of PreK that was supported by Prekindergarten Expansion Grant (PEG) offered by DESE. In 2016, a district team visited Springfield, who received PEG, to explore their model and observe classrooms for exemplary practice.

The key components of high-quality early childhood programming we intend to implement over a three-year period include:

* Reinstating an Early Childhood Department Head, PreK-2, to support teachers with the goal of building strong foundational skills in literacy and numeracy in the primary grades. Additionally, the Department Head will be responsible for supporting teachers with curriculum implementation and professional development, including outreach to families. This position is critical to ensuring the program's success. The Department Head will be responsible for establishing extensive progress monitoring and assessment practices to identify that student needs are being met on a consistent basis. The Early Childhood Department Head will work closely with the Office of Teaching and Learning to ensure alignment of curriculum and instructional practice.
* Hiring an Instructional Leadership Coach with expertise in early childhood literacy who will provide embedded professional development throughout the year.
* Ensuring all PreK educators hold a degree in Early Childhood Education and are prepared to support the needs of incoming students.
* Basing frameworks on national models of early education.
* Staffing PreK and K classrooms with a certified early childhood educator and a full-time paraprofessional. Pre-K class sizes will be limited to 20 students.
* Working with EEC to pursue quality improvement efforts. (QRIS)
* Providing professional development on culturally responsive teaching (CRT) and ensuring that classroom settings are appropriate for our youngest learners.

Our PreK expansion will include the implementation of high-quality core curriculum informed by research, including the features mentioned above.

Our program will include:

* Establishing school-based teams including school (principal, coaches, guidance) and district (Early Childhood Department Head,ELA and STEM Coordinators) personnel to ensure program alignment and success across classrooms.
* Piloting/adopting high-quality, evidence-based curricular materials for all core content areas including science and social studies in PreK.
* Ensuring equitable access for all students by differentiating, scaffolding and accommodating the core curriculum.
* Using valid assessments to identify individual needs.
* Implementing evidence-based interventions and providing ongoing progress monitoring.
* Providing ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers, paraprofessionals and leaders by the Early Childhood Department Head and Instructional Leadership Coach as well as external PD providers.

Throughout the rest of this school year and the summer we will begin planning for the opening of four general education Pre- K classrooms as well as the conversion of one half-day program to a full-time PreK. Activities will include hiring an Early Childhood Department Head, four pre-K teachers and paraprofessionals, and an instructional leadership coach, as well as ordering specialized classroom equipment, furnishings and materials for Pre-K. We will also provide professional development to teachers and building leaders to prepare them for successful implementation. We will offer Pre-K showcases to families that will provide information about registration, school tours, curriculum and the standards, and tips for preparing students for the experience.

## Focus Area 2: Research-based early literacy programs in pre-kindergarten and early elementary grades (E, F, and G)

Research has shown that learning to read is not a natural process. Written language is a code. Teaching young students how to crack the code- teaching systematic phonics- is the most reliable way to ensure they learn how to read the words. Knowing how to decode is an essential first step. If a student cannot decode, it does not matter how much background knowledge or vocabulary they possess. They will not be able to lift the words off the page. Conversely, if a student can decode but does not possess any background knowledge, they will not comprehend the words they can read. Reach for Reading teaches content and will give students any opportunities to develop background knowledge. To supplement systematic and explicitly taught phonics we have implemented Fundations.

**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
* Student Growth: ELA mean student growth percentile (SGP)
* Student Growth: Mathematics mean student growth percentile (SGP)
* High School Completion: Four-year cohort graduation rate
* High School Completion: Extended engagement rate (5 year cohort grad rate plus percentage of students who are still enrolled)
* High School Completion: Annual dropout rate
* 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).
* Additional Indicators: Chronic absenteeism (percentage of students missing 10 percent or more of their days in membership)
* Additional Indicators: Percentage of 11th and 12th graders completing at least one DESE-identified advanced coursework
* Custom District Metric 1: Seal of Biliteracy- The percentage of students who attain the Seal of Biliteracy each year.
* Custom District Metric 2: Students in the Arts- The percentage of students who participate in the district's arts programming.

**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.*

School -community partnerships can interconnect resources and strategies to enhance communities that support all youth and their families. They could improve schools, strengthen neighborhoods and enable young people to build deeper connections to their community. Building such partnerships requires

visioning and strategic planning, as well as creative leadership and new multifaceted roles for professionals who work in schools and communities.

Recognizing the importance of engaging students and families, the district encouraged their involvement in the creation of this plan.

COVID-19 has created an even more urgent need for DESE and the Legislature to continue to support the Student Opportunity Act. The purpose of this act is to assist districts in providing more aid for students, families and staff. We cannot lose sight of what the Student Opportunity Act means. We must understand and address that we are faced with a fluid situation that affects our continuing efforts to create and develop the education plans that make it crucial to move to the next step in our development process. So, it begs the question "What Now?" - Partnerships.

Partnerships must be considered as connections between schools and community resources become scarce, particularly in the wake of the pandemic. These partnerships may include the following:

* Use of school or neighborhood facilities and equipment.
* Sharing other resources; collaborative fundraising and grant applications.
* Volunteer assistance.
* Mentoring and training from professionals and others with special expertise.
* Information sharing; networking; recognition and public relations.
* Shared responsibility for planning, implementation and evaluation of programs and services.
* Expanding opportunities for internships, mentorships, jobs, recreation and building a sense of community.

School-community partnerships can join many resources and strategies to enhance our diverse community so that support for all youth and their families is seamless. BPS has been particularly successful in engaging the community and we look forward to building on our successes. For example, the district has prioritized connecting students to individuals who can relate to their lived experiences. In recent years, BPS has hired community mentors and developed programming with mentors that provide our students with positive caring adults who represent the diversity of our community. We are fortunate to have a network of dedicated community groups that are already engaging with us and we look forward to expanding our partnerships in the years to come.

**Certifications**

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

Parent Forums for the Student Opportunity Act

* SOA Parent Forum to Discuss Bilingual Programs: Monday, March 9, 6:00 p.m., at North Middle School
* SOA Parent Forum to Discuss Special Education Services: Monday, March 9, 7:00 p.m., at North Middle School

Recommendations

The Brockton Public Schools established a gradual, community-based effort to involve a distinctive cross-section of stakeholders in our greater community with the purpose of creating a dialogue around our Student Opportunity Plan proposals. Specifically, we pursued each planned stakeholder meeting from January 2020 to March 2020. This was our core strategy, and luckily, we were able to do face-to-face meetings before COVID-19 changed the landscape. Based on the district's listening tour, we have compiled a set of three documents (see attached) that outline the wishes of students, faculty and the community.

Certifications

* Monday, January 27 - Meeting with the NAACP
* Tuesday, January 28 - Mayor Robert Sullivan Listening Tour
* Tuesday, February 11 - Meeting with the School Committee
* Wednesday, February 12 - Superintendent Meeting with Councilors at Large
* Wednesday, February 12 - Community Schools Advisory Board Meeting Thursday, February 13 – Meeting with all BPS employees
* Tuesday, February 18 - Superintendent's presentation to the City Council
* Tuesday, February 25 - Teacher Forum Elementary Schools
* Thursday, February 27 - Teacher Forum for Middle and High Schools
* Thursday, February 27 - Meeting for residents in Ward Two

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

Date of Approval: 01/12/2021