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

***Community Charter School of Cambridge***

# Commitment 1: Focusing on Student Subgroups

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

As stated in our mission, CCSC is committed to “preparing a diverse student body, grades 6-12, for postsecondary success and productive citizenship.” In order to prepare all students in our diverse population, we must ensure that all students have equitable access to their civil right to an education. A key mechanism for doing this is maximizing time spent in class. Discipline policies and practices directly affect the time students spend in class. In analyzing our discipline data, we found that **boys** and **students with disabilities** have higher rates of suspension (both in- and out-of-school). We intend to focus on these two subgroups to directly address these differences.

In 2019-2020, 1.2% of CCSC students were suspended in-school and 6.9% of students were suspended out-of-school. However, these percentages were higher for the two subgroups in question:

* 2.9% of boys were suspended in-school (a rate 2.4 times higher than that of the full student population) and 12.1% of boys were suspended out-of-school (1.8 times as often as the full student population).
* 6.8% of students with disabilities were suspended in-school (a rate 5.6 times higher than that of the full student population) and 13.6% of students with disabilities were suspended out-of-school (2 times as often as the full student population.)

Differences in time spent in class may also be related to assessment gaps, as shown by average MCAS scores in 2019:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Grades 6-8 ELA** | **Grades 6-8 Math** | **Grade 10 ELA** | **Grade 10 Math** |
| **Boys** | 506.3 | 504.2 | 513.4 | 513.8 |
| **Girls** | 516.6 | 506.1 | 515.6 | 516.8 |
| **Students with Disabilities** | 481.2 | 489.3 | *no data - n is too low* | *no data - n is too low* |
| **Students Without Disabilities** | 516.1 | 507.4 | 518.0 | 519.3 |

We believe that by addressing disparities in suspension, we will also address gaps in performance on statewide standardized assessments.

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

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## 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?

Two fairly new programs at CCSC are aimed at addressing gaps between boys and girls and students with and without disabilities:

#### Institution of a Restorative Justice Program.

Beginning Summer 2020, the administrative team and a guidance counselor were trained in all three tiers of Restorative Justice (RJ) practices by the Center for Restorative Justice at Suffolk University. In August 2020, all staff received RJ Tier 1 training. Tier 2 training for all staff is planned for January 2021. CCSC is also planning training for students who opt to take on the role of RJ peer leaders. Finally, we conducted an abbreviated training to introduce our Board of Trustees to RJ in Fall 2020.

Throughout the next two years, we will continue to train any new staff in Tier 1 RJ practices at a minimum. All students are part of an advisory at CCSC, and all advisors have been implementing Tier 1 restorative circles as part of their advisory community-building efforts during the 2020-2021 school year. CCSC has already piloted Tier 2 and 3 RJ circles for students, staff, and families when the need arises. As more staff are trained in Tier 2, we will expand the use

of these circles, working to replace exclusionary discipline practices with restorative practices. Our hope over the next two years is also that all teachers will occasionally use restorative circles in their subject-area classrooms, not only in advisory. We believe that this will help to create and sustain strong faculty/student relationships, which will both decrease behavior issues and allow any issues to be handled in non-punitive, non-exclusionary ways. **Because RJ focuses on identifying and addressing the root causes behind misbehavior and repairing harm rather than punishing, we will be able to decrease suspension rates for boys and students with disabilities by replacing exclusionary discipline with Tier 2 and 3 RJ practices.**

Although Restorative Justice is not on the Department’s list of evidence-based practices, a [recent literature review](https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/resource-restorative-justice-in-u-s-schools-an-updated-research-review.pdf) found that “the preliminary evidence does suggest that RJ may have positive effects across several outcomes related to discipline, attendance, graduation, climate, and culture. And evidence from a more rigorous assessment suggests that RJ has positive effects on **exclusionary discipline rates, discipline disparities**, and school climate” (p. 35, emphasis added). In addition, our school-wide adoption of RJ aligns with SOA Categories C (Social services to support students’ social-emotional and physical health) and E (PD).

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **FY21 budget item** | **Amount** | **Foundation Category** |
| RJ training for administrators & school counselor | $6,300 | Professional Development |
| RJ training for staff, including purchase of textbooks | $8,655 | Professional Development; Instructional Materials |
| RJ training for Board of Trustees | $1,200 | Professional Development |
| RJ training for student leaders | $1,200 | Other Teaching Services |
| RJ coaching / consulting from Suffolk University | $1,200 | Professional Development |
| **Evidence-based program identified by the Department:** | | n/a |
| **SOA program categories:** | | C (Social services to support students’ social-emotional and physical health); E (PD) |

#### Increased personnel and services to support holistic student needs.

In Fall 2019, CCSC created a new role: **Director of Student Support**. Included in this role’s job description are the following:

* 1. “Support principals with the implementation of a multi-tiered system of supports [MTSS]”
  2. “Provide professional development to faculty on the MTSS process, including awareness of SST [Student Support Team], its purpose, and the process for requesting help”
  3. “Maintain systems to monitor the progress of students and the effectiveness of interventions over multiple meetings”

Tiered supports are categorized into *academic, behavioral,* and *social-emotional*. Behavioral supports are aimed at helping students build self-discipline and other habits critical for success in school. This, in turn, allows CCSC to use less exclusionary discipline as staff are pre-emptively identifying students who may need additional support and actively working with them to develop individual strategies that help them remain in the classroom. As the next two years proceed, we will continue to hone our new systems for evaluating student needs, creating tiered interventions, and tracking those interventions. Members of our focused subgroups (students with disabilities and boys) are placed into the appropriate tier and provided with targeted interventions as needed.

CCSC also increased its mental health counseling staff in Fall 2020, adding 1.0 FTE. We have found that this increased staffing helps us to hold more counseling groups (including those specifically aimed at boys), and also allows counselors to devote more time and resources to our students with disabilities. Counselors are even able to work with special educators, inserting social-emotional support into our pull-out Learning Lab classes that most students with disabilities attend 1-2 times a week. Over the next two years, our expanded counseling staff will continue to look for ways to target supports toward boys and students with disabilities, recognizing that social-emotional supports often are highly effective in addressing behavior issues.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **FY21 budget item** | **Amount** | **Foundation Category1** |
| Additional counseling staff | $70,000 (salary + benefits) | Guidance and Psychological; Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges |
| Director of Student Support | $95,000 (salary + benefits) | Administration; Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges |
| **Evidence-based program identified by the Department:** | | Increased personnel and services to support holistic student needs |
| **SOA program categories:** | | C (Social services to support students’ social-emotional and physical health); D (Hiring school personnel that best support improved student performance) |

# Commitment 3: Monitoring Success with Outcome Metrics and Targets

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## 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.

#### Department outcome metrics:

Decreased MCAS ELA achievement

✓

gaps for boys, SwD

Decreased MCAS Mathematics

✓

achievement gaps for boys, SwD

#### Custom metrics (must include targets as well):

Overall in-school suspension rate <1%

✓

Overall out-of-school suspension rate <4%

✓

Ratio of suspensions for boys:all students and

✓

SwD:all students <1.1

# Commitment 4: Engaging All Families

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## 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?

CCSC engages families in many ways, including:

* Weekly Head of School memos, translated into families’ home languages
* Use of a text messaging service, Talking Points, which translates texts automatically and allows families to respond in their chosen language
* Quarterly meetings of the Special Education PAC
* Monthly Family Association meetings, including those aimed at:
  + Helping families talk to students about difficult issues and support students’ emotional health
  + Engaging families about our new RJ programs
  + Helping parents/guardians of boys to know how to best support their children in our society (*the same topic is provided, although with different programming, for parents/guardians of girls*)
* Partnership with the He is Me Institute, providing mentoring to middle school boys (and involving families in the recruitment process)
* Biweekly Coffee with the Principals meetings, held on Zoom at present -- alternating mornings and late afternoons/early evenings
* Frequent surveys checking in re: how families are feeling about CCSC’s programming and supports, with follow-up for families who request it
  + We have some surveys targeted to families of students with disabilities, and plan to target future surveys to families who have male students

We track family participation at events and will continue to measure participation rates, disaggregated by demographics

1 The foundation categories are: Administration; Instructional Leadership; Classroom & Specialist Teachers; Other Teaching Services; Professional Development; Instructional Materials, Equipment, and Technology; Guidance and Psychological; Pupil Services; Operations and Maintenance; Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges; and Special Education Tuition.

of students. In addition, CCSC will use surveys, including the end-of-year School Climate Survey, to measure family engagement. The EOY survey is administered at Roundtables, an event that all families are required to attend. In Fall 2020, we also had a beginning-of-year survey that had 100% response rate thanks to staff who called every single family and helped them complete it if necessary.

# 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:**

Families were engaged in the following ways:

* Family members participated in our Behavior Working Group, the group that researched Restorative Justice practices and, in the end, recommended that the school adopt RJ.
* Family members helped interview potential staff when we were increasing our counseling FTE.
* Families were surveyed about their students’ needs, particularly social-emotional and behavioral needs, as well as their views on our disciplinary practices. These surveys are the first place that a widespread concern about suspension rates arose.
* At a biweekly Coffee with the Principals meeting, families were introduced to a draft SOA plan and asked to provide feedback.
* Families also received a draft SOA plan in a weekly Head of School Memo and were asked to provide feedback.

Staff were introduced to our SOA plan when it was in draft form and asked to provide feedback. In addition, several staff members served on our Behavior Working Group (described above) and participated in interviews for new counseling staff.

**X By checking here, I certify that the Community Charter School of Cambridge Board of Trustees voted on our Student Opportunity Act Plan.**

**Date of vote: January 20, 2021 Outcome of vote: Unanimously approved**