Student Opportunity Act Plan

Dartmouth

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

*The rationale for selecting these student subgroups.*

The Dartmouth Public School District's (DPS) Strategic Plan was developed around three main focus areas: Teaching and Learning, Access and Equity and Community Engagement. Each of our initiatives is designed to strengthen practices and procedures that promote equal access to curriculum, instruction, assessments and extracurricular programs in an effort to significantly support mental health, academic success and college and career readiness. In considering the kinds of high quality programs that have the potential to support specific student subgroups, we reflected on these focus areas, the initiatives that have already been done to advance them and future actions that will further enhance the district's capacity to meet its goals.

Dartmouth Public Schools' district initiatives have been focused on significantly shifting instructional practices in support of students of the 21st century. Examples of these include moving from teacher directed to student directed classrooms, from completion focused to mastery focused, from summative focused to formative focused, from teacher goals to student-set goals, and from students as consumers to students as creators. Though these shifts are ongoing, the positive changes to date have been accomplished by shifting the educational focus from traditional to blended and personalized learning, inspiring students and teachers to take risks.

While our efforts to shift teachers' practices to a more student-centered approach have resulted in more students achieving at higher levels, we also recognize that there is still a subset of students who are not experiencing the same level of success as their peers. With that in mind we explored data and identified that roughly 10 percent of our graduating students do not continue to a postsecondary education; rather they enter the workforce upon graduation. In general, this group includes students from diverse racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds. It also includes students identified as having special needs. In response, we decided to explore ways to enhance our curriculum offerings and guidance advice to support students who might benefit from high quality career pathway opportunities.

Dartmouth High provides its 1000 students with many opportunities to take AP classes, honors and college courses. Our course of studies effectively supports students who wish to pursue a traditional 4-year college or enter the military but fell short preparing other students for college and career. Noting a need to enhance college and career opportunities for our students who may not choose the college path, we have partnered with Project Lead the Way. This partnership has resulted in a long-term plan to add course work in various areas such as engineering, robotics and Computer Aided Design and provide our identified subgroup of students with relevant and authentic learning experiences that may lead to post-secondary work or a career. In recognition of the need to create a systemic structure to our work around college and career we have also enhanced our offerings at the elementary and middle school levels, particularly around Project Based Learning, STEM and robotics.

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

Over the past few years, DPS has engaged in professional development and partnered with consultants to shift educators' mindsets and enhance instructional practices as we strive to better address the unique needs of our learners. In addition to improvement strategies described in the DPS strategic plan, we intend to continue and deepen our work on two critical initiatives already underway.

## Focus Area 1: Supporting educators to implement high-quality, aligned curriculum (E and F)

After reviewing college attendance and completion data as well as reports from counselors regarding student success and interest in the various programs offered by Dartmouth High School, it was determined there is a subgroup of students that for a variety of reasons, may not choose to attend college. These students report a lower engagement in coursework than their college bound peers. In recognition, the district began its efforts to ensure these students are offered multiple opportunities that will prepare them for employment in the rapidly growing high-tech industries. To that end, district partnered with Project Lead the Way and MASS Insight with the goal of designing a course of studies that will prepare our students as innovators, designers, critical thinkers, entrepreneurs and creators! Through these partnerships and targeted professional development, we have made significant progress increasing the number of students who enroll in high quality Advanced Placement classes and students who enroll in college and career pathways. Thus far, with grant support, we have enhanced our Computer Science, Robotics and engineering offerings at the middle and elementary schools. We have also added a computer science teacher and redesigned the various course pathways at Dartmouth High School. Our intention is to continue this effort by adding qualified staff, offering more targeted professional development, engaging with the local workforce board and ensuring counselors are prepared to advise students who are thinking of choosing a career pathway.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount: enter number, do not use the $ character** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **Partnership with Consultants** | **10,000.00** | **Professional Development** |
| **2** | **MASS Insight** | **15,000.00** | **Professional Development** |
| **3** | **Master Teacher PD Platform** | **20,000.00** | **Professional Development** |
| **4** | **Staff Hiring/Shifting of Personnel** | **45,000.00** | **Classroom & Specialist Teachers** |
| **5** | **PLTW Grant** | **4,000.00** | **Professional Development** |

***Focus Area 2:***  Supporting educators to implement high-quality, aligned curriculum (E and F)

Observations of classroom practices, review of evidence based practices and membership in the AASA's Future Focused Leadership Network sparked the district's interest in revitalizing practices and coursework offerings so we would be better equipped to create classroom environments that provide a more personalized learning experience for every student. The need to focus on this work was confirmed by a review of literature advocating for a more personalized approach to education as a way to provide more equitable opportunities for all students. "Existing research shows generally positive relationships between personalized learning and educational outcomes (indicators of engagement, academic achievement and more) for historically under served students. This research is beginning to confirm the positive effects of a well implemented personalized learning model for increasing engagement and improving student achievement. For example, a recent RAND study focused on five personalized learning practices: learner profiles, personalized learning pathways, competency-based progression, flexible learning environments, and an emphasis on college and career readiness. The study findings suggested that personalized learning has a significant, positive effect on both reading and math scores for students. The study also suggested, but did not find a causal link, that personalized learning could be a tool by which educators close academic achievement and educational equity gaps."

In response, the district will continue its focus on this initiative in support of ensuring shifts in classroom instruction to a Blended and Personalized Learning model. Our work will continue to encourage a future focused, growth mindset. In partnership with various consultants, including the Highlander Institute, staff will continue to be supported in designing and enhancing classroom environments to be more conducive to offering opportunities for students to collaborate, think critically and creatively, and communicate. Teachers are focusing on less whole class teacher talk and more students doing the doing. Together, we are shifting classroom instruction to be buzzing with a variety of engaging tasks. Our technology goals, identified in the district's strategic plan, enhance student learning by providing opportunities for the teacher to facilitate and guide student learning, build relationships and encourage students to be active collaborators in the classroom. The end goal of creating pathways of learning is to arrive at required outcomes in a way that is relevant to each learner which is being supported by Highlander Institute, Instructional Coaches and administration. The professional development being offered in this area will ensure our teachers are better prepared to develop and sustain optimum learning environments that are better equipped to address the needs of the subset of students being targeted

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| **1** | **Partnership with Consultants** | **10,000.00** | **Professional Development** |
| **2** | **MASS Insight** | **15,000.00** | **Instructional Materials, Equipment, and Technology** |
| **3** | **Master Teacher PD Platform** | **20,000.00** | **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 Growth: ELA mean student growth percentile (SGP)
* Student Growth: Mathematics mean student growth percentile (SGP)
* High School Completion: Four-year cohort graduation rate
* 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
* Post-secondary Success: Enrolled in college during the first year after high school
* Post-secondary Success: Persisted in college into the second year Custom District Metric 1: Work experience/internship data
* Custom District Metric 2: Classroom observations in classroom practices Custom District Metric 3: Informal assessment data
* Custom District Metric 4: Engagement survey data re: Mass STEM Hub
* Custom District Metric 5: Student participation & on track data relative to completing 3 year course pathway in PLTW
* Custom District Metric 6: AP Class enrollment increase

**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 Dartmouth Public Schools recognizes the importance of family engagement for all students; particularly those representing the student subgroups we have identified and are focusing on for these aforementioned initiatives. This is evidenced by our strategic plans' inclusion of Access and Equity as one of its key focus areas. Over the past few years we have made a significant effort to enhance communications with various stakeholders. For the purposes of the initiatives included in this plan we have engaged stakeholders, including counselors, students, parents, school council members and school committee in conversations about the need to address the subgroup of the students not looking to attend college after graduation. In our commitment to students gaining 21st Century skills we have worked with parents and guardians of all levels (elementary, middle and high) in communicating our shifts in instructional practices. These communications include literature around the need to be more student centered in our approach. Newsletters are emailed and posted on our website regarding new terminology and instructional practices. Examples of students' work are shared to the community. At each of our transition levels, Showcase Evenings are held to inform families of the various opportunities provided to students. We also have an active SEPAC group that works with parents, alerting them to the many opportunities the district offers.

**Certifications**

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

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

Date of Approval: 01/11/2021