Student Opportunity Act Plan

Dennis-Yarmouth

# 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
* 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
* Hispanic or Latinx students
* Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic/Non-Latinx students

*The rationale for selecting these student subgroups.*

Focus Area 2 in our strategic plan is Student Learning: Supportive School Culture-Diverse Learners/Wellness. Our theory of action is that if the Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School District "fosters a learning environment that provides support for the academic growth, social/emotional needs, and health and wellness of our students, then we will empower each student to achieve excellence with integrity in a changing world. Our Student Opportunity Act Plan addresses this focus area.

Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School District is a richly diverse school community with almost 35% of the total student population who are people of color. A few years ago we began to look at our data with a different lens to ensure that all students were benefiting from a rich school experience. We reviewed 4-year graduation rates, dropout rates, chronic absenteeism rates, and advanced course completion rates to determine how each of these groups of students were performing in each area.

A review of these data points showed that, despite the notion that we were delivering the same curriculum and instruction to all students the outcomes for all students were not the same. Across all these metrics our students of color,

high needs students, English Language Learners, and economically disadvantaged students were chronically absent more, had higher dropout rates, had lower 4-year graduation rates, and were not taking/completing advanced course work as often as their peers.

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

We started to take steps to improve these outcomes in FY19. We uncovered some root causes and in just a short time the data shows that we have made some progress. However, there is more work to be done to ensure we are closing opportunity gaps and increasing student achievement. Our plan initiatives will build on the work we have been doing. We are committed to continuing this work to ensure further improvement.

Focus Area 1: Increased personnel and services to support holistic student needs (C and/or D)

Improving attendance for all subgroups.

We have focused on attendance in our district for a long time. As far back as 2010, we developed a program called "Keep Them Coming" in partnership with the local District Attorney. Most of our schools improved to 95% or better attendance, so we mistakenly felt we were doing well. Each school often had a handful of students that were chronically absent and we worked to try to improve that but often with little success despite the best efforts of our social workers.

However, when DESE changed the accountability system to include chronic absenteeism, it caused us to look at attendance in a new way. We found great resources on the web from Attendance Works. Utilizing those resources, we created our Attendance Plan. In addition to the steps taken to educate families, work with individual families, and developing attendance teams for each school we held regular administrative data meetings around attendance and, until the pandemic, things improved. We will continue to use our Attendance Plan and revise as needed.

One of the things we discovered as we implemented our Attendance Plan was that for some of our middle and high school students there are mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, that keep them from attending school. It was our plan to utilize our SOA funds to either hire some clinicians for in-school support or partner with another agency. We had discussed a partnership with Effective School Solutions (ESS) to create a program within our high school in year one. If the program was successful we would develop a similar program for our middle school students in year two. Our goal in year three would be to expand to the elementary level as needed.

We already partner with Gosnold, a nationally accredited non-profit leader in the prevention, treatment, and recovery of mental health and substance use disorders. In addition, we partner with Behavioral Health Innovators for an after hours Alternative Peer Group (APG) program staffed by mental health counselors. Teens who attend the APG have a safe, fun, peer-supported sober space to explore and create their own path of recovery. We will continue these programs.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount: enter number, do not use the $ character** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **Mental Health Support** | **225,000** | **Guidance and Psychological** |

Focus Area 2: Acceleration Academies and/or summer learning to support skill development and accelerate advanced learners (A and E)

Increasing the number of students in all subgroups who are completing Advanced Coursework.

Beginning with the 2018-2019 school year, we started a partnership with Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS). We made a significant effort to change the way we recruit and support our students for advanced coursework. As you can see from the data, this is working. We will continue this. Some of our SOA money needs to be used for student supports to ensure those who sign up for advanced coursework will complete the courses with a successful outcome. Prior to the pandemic the high school had set up its schedule to provide designated time during the school day for advanced coursework students to seek extra help. This will continue after we return to our full in-person instruction. A portion of our SOA money will be used to support stipends for teachers to hold after school, summer, and weekend study sessions.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount (enter number, do not use the $ character)** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **Educator stipends for Academic Support** | **51,148** | **Classroom & Specialist Teachers** |

## Focus Area 3: Increased personnel and services to support holistic student needs (C and/or D)

Engaging in multi-year equity work for all educators and support staff

We would like to work with an equity partner that could help us examine our practices to make improvements. We know that this work cannot be completed in a "one and done" professional development day. It is work that takes significant time and commitment if it is to make a real difference in the engagement and success of our students of color. We are exploring the possibility of working with Dr. Darnissa Amante-Jackson's Disruptive Equity Education Project (DEEP). We would utilize some of our SOA funds to hire this partner to assist us.

It is difficult to recruit people of color to work in schools on Cape Cod. We have very few staff members that look like 35% of our students. We know that through this work and the professional development for all of us, we will become more inclusive and a district where people of color want to teach and work.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount (enter number, do not use the $ character)** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **Equity and Inclusion Work** | **100,000** | **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.*

* High School Completion: Four-year cohort graduation rate
* High School Completion: Annual dropout 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
* Custom District Metric 1: Staff data on race/ethnicity

**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.*

Focus Area 3 of our Strategic Plan is Communication

* Inform – Keep staff, families and community well-informed about our schools.
* Listen- Pursue opportunities for stakeholder input
* Engage-Create opportunities for two-way communication

Strategic Objective: Maintain and enhance support systems for effective, proactive and two-way communication among schools, families, and community.

We have made some strides in engaging families through the parents groups, school councils, and PACs. We had an active SPED PAC and last year we added an EL PAC. This really brought our EL families to the table for more meaningful participation in the school community. We hired interpreters to be at the meetings to assist. We have made countless efforts to send out our correspondence in multiple languages and we use Language Line to assist when one-to-one conversations are needed.

During the re-opening of school, we had several surveys that went out to parents to get input as we developed our re-opening plans and to get their input about the upcoming year's learning experience for their child. As a result in K-7 we have between 80-85% of our students back to school in-person. Surveys are often a useful way to get feedback. We have electronic systems and use translated documents to reach all families.

It is highly likely that when we examine our practices closely, we will find other new ways to engage our families in this work. We plan to have a district equity and inclusion team and a team at each school that would include teachers, parents, community members, and administrators. It would be wonderful to have a parent from each school participate in the equity work at the district level. It has been our experience that when we ask individual parents to join a group, we are more likely to create a diverse group. People join when they are asked, if they can give the time. This is important as we move forward with this plan.

**Certifications**

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

Due to COVID and time restraints we were somewhat limited. We utilized public comment at our School Committee to garner feedback on the plan. Some of the feedback received included: Utilizing people of color in the community at career days, purchasing supplemental materials for students in advanced coursework, provide student stipends (because many of our students must work and cannot put the time necessary to be successful in advanced coursework, and educating parents on the importance and value of advanced coursework. We have a person of color on our school committee who also commented positively on the plan.

*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