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

***Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers***

***Horace Mann Charter School***

## → Commitment 1: Focusing on Student Subgroups

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

Kennedy Academy prioritizes two groups for focused attention: English learners and former English learners; and students with complex social-emotional needs that interfere with their engagement and success in school.

School accountability system data and our most recent DESE English Learner Program review reveal persistent difficulty meeting English language proficiency goals for our English learners and former English learners. In 2019, the proportion of EL and FEL students meeting their English language proficiency targets was 23.8%, a decline from 34.9% in 2018.

While EMK students in aggregate and in ALL measured population subgroups are meeting or exceeding accountability system targets for MCAS achievement and growth in English, math, and science, we note small but persistent gaps in achievement for our EL/FEL students, with slightly lower Composite Performance Index measures and slightly lower growth measures in both 2018 and 2019.

The school accountability system also reveals persistent difficulty with chronic absenteeism, with a decline in 2019 to 30.5% of all students, compared to 28.3% in 2018. This decline from 2018 to 2019 is true for all measured population subgroups. The internal work of the attendance committee of our student support team reveals that chronic absenteeism is a particular challenge for students with identified social-emotional needs. We are committed to providing the SEL supports these students and families need in order to facilitate their more successful engagement in school.

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

**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 you allocate to these programs?**

### Evidence-based program #1: Deepening ESL Departmental Leadership and Instructional Collaboration

As a full-inclusion high school, EMK has for years supported all teachers to obtain dual licensure in ESL and Moderate Disabilities. In addition, EMK has built high-quality leadership structures for our English Learner and Special Education departments. For many years we have employed a full-time Special Education Program Director, an instructional leader with primary district-level and school-level responsibility for professional development, program planning, monitoring, and compliance. In FY 21, for the first time, we have hired an English Learner Program Coordinator with a similar level of responsibility. This is an essential step to assure that teachers are engaged in the process of establishing individualized annual proficiency improvement goals for each EL student, with related progress monitoring as a regular practice at the mid-point and end-point of each academic term. It also provides a mechanism for collaborative planning between the EL Program Coordinator and our ESL instructors, with dedicated professional development opportunities for the full EMK faculty focused on instructional practices to support English learners.

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| **FY21 budget item** | **Amount** | **Foundation Category1** |
| EL Program Coordinator - 1 FTE | $80,000 | Instructional Leadership; Professional Development |
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| **Evidence-based program identified by the**  **Department:** | | ***7. Inclusion/co-teaching for students with disabilities and English learners*** |
| **SOA program categories:** | | D) Hiring school personnel that best support improved student performance; E) Increased or improved professional development; |

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### Evidence-based program #2: Expansion of Social-Emotional Supports

EMK has long-maintained a very active Student Support Team, focused on individualized support for students whose social-emotional and behavioral needs interfere with their school success. Facilitated by our Special Education Program Director, the SST includes two full-time Guidance Counselors, two Deans of Students, two nurses, and two Assistant Heads of School. In response to an alarming increase in our students’ mental health needs, we partnered with the New England Home for Little Wanderers to engage two full-time mental health clinicians to provide direct counseling services onsite during the school day. Recognizing the increasingly complex social-emotional learning challenges experienced by EMK students and families, in FY 21 we added a new full-time bilingual social worker to provide focused support to students most in need of tier two and tier three interventions.

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| **FY21 budget item** | **Amount** | **Foundation Category** |
| 1 FTE Social Worker | $80,000 | Guidance and Psychological |
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| **Evidence-based program identified by the Department:** | | 6. Increased personnel and services to support holistic student needs |
| **SOA program categories:** | | C) Social services to support students’ social-emotional and physical health |

### Evidence-based program #3: Expansion of Case Management and Tiered Intervention Structures

In FY20 EMK piloted the Building Assets Reducing Risks (BARR) Tiered Intervention Model with the ninth grade team. The model engages faculty members as BARR Advisors for small groups of students and uses a

data-driven case management model to support early identification and intervention for students needing support. Through a scripted risk review process students in need of higher levels of support are escalated to the more comprehensive student support team for extended student and family involvement. The model focuses on attendance, behavior, engagement and academic achievement as indicators of success and provides advisors with dynamic data to evaluate student risk level. Given the power of this model as an organizing practice for the work of our grade nine team, and the complexity of sustaining engagement during remote learning, we expanded this model to include all students in grades 9-12, and all faculty and staff in the school.

In FY 19 EMK rekindled its student advisory program, establishing small multi-grade groups of students matched for weekly meetings with two faculty/staff members to focus on community and relationship building, social-emotional skill development, and college and career goal setting. In FY 21, the EMK Advisory program has been restructured as part of the BARR intervention model described above. Meetings will increase from 1 to 3 times weekly, with newly established structures that support the Advisor as the primary point of entry for home-school communication.

This effort required not only support for stipend planning work, but BARR training in September for the full staff at higher grade levels, as well as scheduling changes to permit additional advisory meetings with students and more frequent grade level and SST meetings.

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| **FY21 budget item** | **Amount** | **Foundation Category** |
| Advisory Facilitator stipends | $6,000 | Pupil Services |
| BARR Coordinator stipends | $6,000 | Pupil Services |
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| **Evidence-based program identified by the Department:** | | 6. Increased personnel and services to support holistic student needs |
| **SOA program categories:** | | C) Social services to support students’ social-emotional and physical health |

# → Commitment 3: Monitoring Success with Outcome Metrics and Targets

**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.**

The most important measure of success with our EL students is their progress toward DESE proficiency targets measured by the ACCESS test. By establishing the EL Program Coordinator position at EMK we have created an instructional leader who will guide all teachers to establish individualized proficiency goals across the four domains of language development, with a clear quarterly and annual process for monitoring progress.

Secondary measures of success with our EL students are their continued achievement on MCAS tests across the curriculum in line with our aggregate student achievement levels.

Two measures of success are used to monitor our success with students who have high social/emotional and behavioral needs. First, with an intense case management focus and an increase in direct school-based social work and mental health supports, we expect to reduce chronic absenteeism that is especially common with these students. Second, we expect to see improvements in student engagement reflected in the student engagement in school questions that are part of our student climate survey each year.

**1) Department outcome metrics:**

✓ EL students will meet or exceed

CPI targets for MCAS ELA achievement

✓ EL students will meet or exceed

CPI targets for MCAS mathematics achievement.

✓ EL students will meet targets for

progress towards attaining English language proficiency (percentage of students meeting annual targets calculated to attain English proficiency in six years)

✓ Reduction in aggregate chronic absenteeism (percentage of students missing 10 percent or more of their days in membership)

**2) Custom metrics (must include targets as well):**

✓ EMK students will report steady or improving engagement in school as measured by the annual student climate survey.

# → Commitment 4: Engaging All Families

**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?**

The implementation of the Building Assets Reducing Risks (BARR) model discussed above has created a new and very important mechanism for engaging ALL families. The student population is divided into small groups of 10-14 students, matched with a BARR Advisor. The BARR Advisor is the primary contact for the the parents/guardians of each advisee, and proactively and persistently reaches out to families twice each quarter (more often if needed) to communicate about a student’s progress and needs. Importantly, each Advisory group is assigned a dedicated staff member who is the liaison to the school-wide Student Support Team (SST). Weekly Communication between the Advisors and the SST Liaisons assure that students needing the highest level of social-emotional support are quickly identified and referred for second and third tier intervention. These referrals require additional communication with families. Regular communication from the school leader also invites families to reach out to their students’ Advisor at any time regarding their students’ needs. For our English learners and IEP students in particular, a separate annual review process invites family participation with the student, teachers and EL/SPED Program Coordinators to discuss proficiency progress and establish individualized proficiency goals for the next academic year.

Each year EMK families complete the Parent Climate Survey, with extraordinarily high participation rates. To assure that our communication and outreach efforts are successful we look for steady and improving feedback from parents on questions related to communication and student/family supports.

# 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:**

Every five years, as part of our charter renewal process, EMK engages an external facilitator to lead our strategic planning process. This process includes written surveys and in-person focus groups with the Board of Trustees, school leaders, faculty and staff, alumni, students, families, and community partners. From this process the charter renewal plan is developed with strategic goals that will guide the next five year cycle.

The EMK accountability plan is developed from these goals and is shared with the school community, and the charter school annual report is prepared and shared each year to reflect on our progress and chart the course for the next year. The Board of Trustees reviews progress of the school toward its goals as part of its monthly meetings with the Head of School. Faculty and staff provide continuous reflection and feedback about initiatives to reach our strategic goals through the work of our Shared Leadership Team. Both our grade-level and department-level leadership structures provide mechanisms for feedback and discussion of needs and priorities. Families are part of our Parent Advisory Council, meeting monthly throughout the school year, and advocating on behalf of the school with the Boston school committee. All families have the opportunity to complete the annual climate surveys to help us assess our progress and needs. Students are engaged in providing feedback to teachers and school leaders through the Student Council, and through annual school climate surveys. EMK also regularly administers the teacher feedback survey that allows students to direct specific feedback to individual teachers about their classroom learning experience.

Finally, less formal but more frequent student feedback is gathered through small group advisory meetings which allow us to adapt to student concerns and needs as they arise. We trust that these activities engage all members of our school community in the process of establishing priorities and monitoring our success as a school community over time.

# ✔ By checking here, I certify that the Edward M. Kennedy Academy Board of Trustees voted on our Student Opportunity Act Plan.

**Date of vote: January 20, 2021 Outcome of vote: Affirmative - Unanimous**