Student Opportunity Act Plan

Haverhill

# 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.*

* High Needs students (defined as any student who is economically disadvantaged, has a disability, or is an English learner/former English learner)

*The rationale for selecting these student subgroups.*

The district's student population has shown a steady increase over the past seven years, rising by a little over four percent since SY 2014. During that same period of time, the percentage of students in the district designated by DESE as special needs, ELLs, or living in poverty has increased from 50% to 62% of all students. In particular our youngest grades have increasing numbers of both English Learners and Economically Disadvantaged students.

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

The school district has undergone significant turnover in leadership staff in recent years. Substantial efforts have been made to provide high-quality services to all students. However, at present, our tiered system of interventions is not fully articulated and does not always allow students equitable access to a high-quality educational opportunity. Concerns of inequities across and within schools echoed in interviews with staff, families, and community members. Inequities and inadequacies were specifically and consistently noted in terms of:

* student-teacher ratios
* access to social emotional supports and resources
* inclusive supports for SWD & ELs
* curriculum related supports for all teachers and students

These inequities were visibly obvious during school and classroom observations and, in many cases, correlate with student outcomes.

Despite the efforts of many dedicated and talented staff, the district lacks a fully articulated tiered system of interventions. The tier one instructional core should offer preventive and proactive measures to support all students in the general education setting. Yet, tier one is not fully articulated and lacks many of the tools and supports needed. Systems issues such as scheduling, teacher assignment and limited instructional resources, combined with a lack of focus on meeting the needs of all learners, results in many students being removed from the general education classroom to have their educational needs met. At the tier two level, targeted small group instruction is available in some schools, but not in all schools. Many tier three interventionists are overwhelmed due to the lack of needed supports at the Tier one and two levels, leaving far too many children floundering.

Therefore, we have chosen to address High Needs Students as a whole because we believe this encompasses the needs of all struggling learners and because we believe that Haverhill needs systemic realignment in order to ensure that all students achieve at high levels.

## Focus Area 1: Expanded access to full-day, high-quality pre-kindergarten for 4-year-olds, including potential collaboration with other local providers (D, F, and G)

Haverhill will be adding 4 early childhood classrooms in a braided model with a local community partner. All will be located at our High School. The rationale for this is broad, first there is no space in the Moody Early Childhood Program or in any of our elementary programs. Secondly, and more importantly, having the program at the high school will allow students in our Early Childhood Development career preparation program onsite internship options. Thirdly, the programs will provide onsite childcare options to both HHS students and teachers raising small children.

Two of the classrooms will be run by our local YMCA program via an RFP in partnership with HPS. The other two classrooms will be a HPS integrated model of early childhood classrooms. Each HPS classroom will have a teacher and two paraprofessionals. We will be seeking funding through this SOA for a school adjustment counselor to be share between the programs as Moody Preschool does not currently employ a counselor. Other related services personnel will offer related services as required by student's IEPs.

We expect that at full capacity this will add 60 needed early childhood seats to our community.

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

In order to support educators in implementing a high-quality aligned curriculum, HPS proposes to expand our current coaching model to support each school with a full-time instructional coach. These coaches will support high quality instruction in the building in terms of alignment to the frameworks and Common Core as well as in in supporting the differentiation of instruction. This will include continued coaching of our coaches by Confianza. This year the school district began a partnership with Confianza to support HPS leaders and educators to provide access and opportunity for diverse learners across the entire system. This has been paid for by Title 1 money and will continue from this funding source into the coming years.

We are proposing to add 5.5 interventionists across our schools - in order to support the equitable distribution interventionists. This will bring us to 28.5 interventionists and 13 instructional coaches across the school district. While we do not believe this will be sufficient to meet all needs across the city, we do believe that it is the building block of a lasting infrastructure that will be able to support the needs of our students for years to come.

We believe that this infrastructure will require great leaders as well as great teachers. We are planning the addition of three curriculum supervisors. Two of these leaders will in the coming years, grow Social Emotional Learning/Health and the Arts to be pillars of our school system. The third will be the addition of an Early Literacy Supervisor - which will be split from the current ELA supervisor position to allow one position to focus on Pre-K to third grade literacy learning while the other focuses on grades 3 - 12 humanities.

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

The changes in our society as a whole and those within the City of Haverhill demand that the school system create robust, defined and dedicated tiered behavioral health system. Haverhill Public Schools has several social emotional learning initiatives underway, including the ECLC planning initiative, BARR grant programs (Building Assets Reducing Risks), Classroom Dojo, Dean's List, Lesley Institute for Trauma Sensitivity, and Teaching with Poverty in Mind Study Groups, as well as the PAX Good Behavior Game. Multiple schools report being PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports) schools; however,

indications that the program is not being implemented with fidelity are visible in many of these schools. The High School has begun some work around Safe Schools programming for LBGTQ students, but these supports are in their infancy and have not yet spread systemically. There is no specific guidance or comprehensive plan for social emotional learning (SEL) across the district. Several families of English learners and students of color have specifically reached out seeking to discuss issues of racial inequities and racism in our schools. These parents are joined by a larger community of parents concerned about bullying and behavioral outbursts in our classrooms. While pockets of high quality social emotional learning initiatives exist across the district, research has clearly shown that to truly impact school culture they must be universally implemented.

The American School Counselors Association recommends one school counselor to every 250 students. This ratio may vary depending upon the level of need in the community and the concentration of disability-related programs within a school.

Haverhill currently employs 19 school guidance and school adjustment counselors for our 6,000 pre-K-8 students, as well as 7 guidance counselors and 3 school adjustment counselors for our 1,800 high school students. The caseloads of these student support professionals vary widely across the district in terms of size and need.

HPS is revamping our organizational priorities and adding a Director of Behavioral Health services to oversee both school-based support services and to assure that we are maximizing our community connections and providing our students with the best and most accessible services available. Additionally, we will be adding 7 new School Adjustment Counselor positions across our 16 school, as well as 4 Building-based Behavioral Support staff. As well as 1.4 Guidance Counselors to assure that each middle school has a full-time guidance counselor to support not only the mental health needs of our students but their early planning for college and career readiness. Along with these positions, 7 additional Parent Engagement Specialists will be added to our present team to assure each elementary, middle and high school have a full-time parent bi-lingual engagement specialist on staff.

## Focus Area 4: Inclusion/co-teaching for students with disabilities and English learners (D and/or E)

Tier three interventions include additional or unique instructional strategies beyond those typically available to all students. Tier three may include special education, English language development, school counseling services, and intensive and individualized academic interventions. Effective tier three services require the ongoing use of data, problem solving analysis, and frequent progress monitoring. The efficacy of tier three interventions varies across the district, with some schools implementing sophisticated data- based instructional cycles while others gather data, but do not tie the results to instructional change.

The district has been identified by DESE as having a significant over-identification of students placed on the MCAS Alternate Assessment. This impacts the student's long-term likelihood of graduation with a standard high school diploma by allowing for a significantly modified curriculum to increase learning gaps. While the district has been working to return students to the on- demand MCAS, both staffing and knowledge are needed to support students with more significant but not profound disabilities in accessing the general curriculum and MCAS on-demand.

The distribution of special education funds and staffing was previously spread across multiple schools and departments, obfuscating the extent of needs and staffing. Furthermore, the limited number of special educator administrative staff available to provide observation and feedback to the staff within the department is a significant weakness. administrative staff available to assist with the management of the department, including supervision and evaluation of special education staff.

Last spring, a Coordinated Program Review (CPR) will be conducted by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, reviewing special education, English Language Learner Programs, and Career Vocational Technical Educational Programs at HPS. While each of these departments has new leadership and is working hard to fix systemic issues, previous reports have noted significant areas for growth, and some of these issues are not yet completely resolved. In part the issues were due to a serious lack of staffing at least in part due to a lack of funds available to the district to support our neediest students.

HPS is proposing the addition of two special education administrative positions to oversee elementary and middle school programs and staff. The district is presently simply too large to be managed by effectively with the staffing in place. The data, the parents, and the teachers are all clear that a revised special education structure with more oversight, better defined programs, and more supports is imperative. We are proposing the addition of 15 special education teachers across a variety of schools and programs, to include an Assessment Center at the GreenLeaf Therapeutic Day School. This program will offer Extended Evaluations to middle school and High School students in crisis. To support this effort the program will add 2 special education teachers, 4 educational support professionals, and a school adjustment counselor - as noted in the explanation for Evidenced based Program 6.

In SY 19-20 the el Department worked to return our EL students to their neighborhood schools and to reallocate our EL teachers from program schools to all schools across the district. This in combination with a rapid increase in our population of ELs at HHS has our EL teachers spread too thin to adequately teach ELD, content and support the many needs of our newcomers. We are currently in need of 4.5 additional EL teachers to meet the needs of our students.

## Focus Area 5: Acceleration Academies and/or summer learning to support skill development and accelerate advanced learners (A and E)

HPS has a robust and growing variety of expanded learning programs - including before, after and during school tutoring services, a large 21st Century Learning Grant, vacation academies, Saturday school options, as well as robust summer programing for over 700 students. We require dedicated program oversight and supervision in order to assure programing is high quality and meeting the needs of all students. We propose the creation of a position which will lead the close to 2-million-dollar effort to provide all students expanded access to high quality learning opportunities.

## Focus Area 6: Dropout prevention and recovery programs (I)

Knowing that school disenfranchisement is an early indicator of potential drop out and that we can identify this and other early warning signs long before high school. We plan to expand our Bridge Alternative Learning Program to include middle school programs. In order to assure high quality programming and support for these vulnerable learners we propose the addition of an onsite Principal/Director of the Crowell School, which is currently overseen by the HHS principal. We would add to the program 2 middle school teachers, 2 educational support professionals and a school adjustment counselor. We believe that a gateway city with the needs of Haverhill requires a small supportive learning environment that can meet the needs of children that have experienced trauma of for other reasons need a more personalized learning experience. Furthermore, we believe that the expansion and improvement of such a program will help to reduce the numbers of students in overly restrictive special education programming and will provide relief to general education classrooms where at times some students are overwhelmed by the size and pace of the classroom and react with extreme behavioral outbursts that impact their learning and the learning of their peers.

## Focus Area 7: Diversifying the educator/administrator workforce through recruitment and retention (D and/or H)

The diversity of Haverhill's population is increasing rapidly, the diversity of our staff, while increasing, is not increasing at anywhere near the rate of our student diversity. This changing demographic means our recruitment efforts need of change as well, we need to be more targeted in our efforts and more supportive of the needs of our teachers both veteran and those new to the district. We propose to add to our small but mighty HR Department a Retention, Recruitment and Diversity specialist dedicated to supporting this effort.

## Focus Area 8: Increased staffing to expand student access to arts, athletics, and enrichment, and strategic scheduling to enable common planning time for teachers (B and D)

We proposed adding 2.8 encore or specialist teachers in order to support the 2 schools that do not currently have meaningful access to common planning time. Adding these teachers will engage students in meaningful activities while their classroom teachers collaborate, look at data and plan meaningful lessons that meet the needs of the students in front of them.

**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

**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.*

A portion of our SOA dollars are going to adding a full-time bilingual parent engagement specialist in each school. This will almost triple our current parent engagement team. The present structure supports cross training for these individuals by our Title 1 Director, Special Ed Director and EL Department, as well as being members of their school-based engagement teams which receive professional development, support and guidance from 1647, 1647 prepares educators to engage all families in equal partnerships that are essential to student success. 1647 believes that every family wants what is best for their child.

When schools build trusting relationships with all families, true school-family partnerships take root that empower all families to support their child's success in school.

**Certifications**

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

HPS held 3 community forums (a 4th was scheduled but canceled due to statewide shutdown) These forums included a meeting with our Special Education Parent Advisory Council, which attracted over 30 participants. A similar Meeting with our EL Pac, which attracted more than 50 families and a meeting of well over 100 staff members. Each of these meetings offered translation, babysitting and supper. To make up from the canceled meeting we initiated an online survey which attracted another 50 responses.

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

Date of Approval: 04/01/2020