Student Opportunity Act Plan

District Manchester Essex Regional

# 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
* 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.*

Over the past three years, our district has analyzed MCAS data as well as district data to identify areas for curricular alignment, as well as student support and remediation. Our district also participated in a number of evaluations and independent reviews related to identifying areas for growth related to instructional practice and alignment of our ELA curriculum to MA frameworks. Additionally, MERSD participated in a coordinated review and analyses of our special education programmatic, curricular, and instructional practices. An independent review of our elementary special education services two years ago found that our district could make further progress in serving our SWD in the least restrictive environment. From independent evaluation of curricular and instructional ELA practices, MERSD at any given time was using over 250 disparate pieces of ELA curriculum for K-5 ELA instruction and over 120 different assessment tools.

Our MCAS district data shows that for the past three years, our third through fifth grade reading students' proficiency levels have leveled off at approximately 71% of students meeting or exceeding expectations with 30% of third grade students scoring partially meeting and/or not meeting grade-level expectations. MERSD's lowest-performing subgroups are our special education and free-and-reduced populations.

2019 MCAS data for subgroups for the past two years show that approximately 53% of students scored partially or not meeting grade-level expectations in 3rd grade ELA.

Moving forward, district-based assessments and instruction in ELA using fully-aligned curriculum are expected to be the focus on student achievement for all students, and particularly supportive for student subgroups. In addition to fully aligned curriculum, focused tiered intervention and support will be coordinated to support our lowest-performing subgroup, special education and low-income, as well as ELL students in ELA in grades K-5.

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

Our district will adopt an evidence-based literacy program to ensure vertically and horizontally-aligned curriculum for all students in grades K-5. Additionally, as part of this allocation, we expect to expand our PreK program to include more students in hopes to support our goals for early literacy.

Our goals for closing student achievement gaps focus on ensuring grade-level reading skills are assesses and taught at all elementary grade levels. A fully integrated evidence-based literacy curriculum focuses on the five pillars of reading instruction will ensure that all students receive high-quality instruction as well as aligned and integrated remediation practices which are inter-connected to strong Tier 1 literacy instruction and coordinated remediations among all tiers of literacy instruction to ensure that all students have access to a robust fully-aligned general education curriculum. The curriculum adoption of an evidence-based literacy curriculum preK-5 will also ensure that students receive anti-biased culturally appropriate content.

Additionally, this program will allow for high-level professional development for all staff.

## Focus Area 1: Research-based early literacy programs in pre-kindergarten and early elementary grades (E, F, and G)

After participating in a year-long process with the Hill for Literacy supporting an in-depth English Language Arts Curriculum Review, the district adopted the Wonders K-5 Literacy Program for the 2020-2021 school year.

Wonders 2020 meets all expectations for high-quality evidence-based literacy instructional materials in grades PreK-5. Wonders 2020 meets the benchmarks for text complexity meaning texts are worthy of students' time and attention, the materials support students' advancing toward independent reading, and provide opportunities for rich and rigorous evidence- based discussions and writing about texts. Materials in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language are targeted to support foundational reading development and are aligned to the standards.

Regarding building students' knowledge, Wonders 2020 materials support students' increasing writing skills over the year, building students' writing proficiency. The instructional materials include a progression of focused research projects to encourage students to develop knowledge using multiple texts and source materials and provide a design, including accountability, for how students engage in independent reading either in or outside of class. For usability, Wonders 2020, materials provide teachers with strategies for meeting the needs of a range of learners so that they demonstrate independent ability with grade-level standards. Materials support the effective use of technology to enhance student learning. Digital materials are accessible and available on multiple platforms.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount: enter number, do not use the $ character** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **McGraw Hill** | **180,000 / 39,000 annual for 5 years** | **Instructional Materials, Equipment, and Technology** |

**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 Achievement: English language arts (ELA) achievement as measured by average scaled scores on MCAS
* Student Growth: ELA mean student growth percentile (SGP)
* Custom District Metric 1: Aimsweb Benchmark Data

**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.*

MERSD recognizes that family engagement and support is critical to ensuring successful outcomes for all students. Given our focus on student subgroups, it is particularly important that we find ways to effectively engage our families of students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, EL students, and students with disabilities.

In partnership with The HILL for Literacy, Inc and the Beverly YMCA, Manchester Essex School District is launching an afterschool Tutoring and summer Literacy Support Program. Students will receive small group instruction virtually with a teacher that has been trained specifically by HILL. Students benefits from the program include: improve reading levels, build a solid foundation of reading skills and develop critical skills that serve as the building blocks of learning and communication. High needs students will be targeted for both afterschool and summer support.

**Certifications**

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

Note on SOA plan approval - Given that MERSD is not a recipient of the significant SOA funds, and the funds it is scheduled to receive will likely be via special education cost reimbursements in the area of transportation and/or circuit breaker, the improvement measures outlined in this submission were scheduled to take place and be funded regardless of SOA status.

The funding is planned to be used as an offset (in lieu of reserves) to increasing special education costs to close annual funding gaps and maintain a level services budget. This financial assistance allows us to fund initiatives such as the literacy program. In our FY21 budget, we included the anticipated Special Education transportation reimbursement in that manner. Our annual budget development process includes two public hearings at which the priorities of the budget are outlined and public input taken from all stakeholders. Additionally, our budgeting process began at the school level and included regularly scheduled collaboration meetings with the Chairs of the School Committee, Boards of Selectman, and Finance Committees in both member towns.

MERSD Budget Page - https://[www.mersd.org/Page/327](http://www.mersd.org/Page/327)

The approval date below represents the date of the FY21 Budget Approval inclusive of the anticipated Special Education Transportation reimbursement funding.

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

Date of Approval: 02/04/2020