Student Opportunity Act Plan

New Bedford

# 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
* 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)

*The rationale for selecting these student subgroups.*

The diverse demographics of our student body are as follows:

Black: 13.3%

Asian: 0.9%

Hispanic: 40.9%

White: 39%

Multi-race/Non-Hispan: 5.4%

First Lang. not English: 41.5%

ELL: 28.5%

Students w/disabilities: 20.9%

High needs: 81.1%

Econ Disadvan: 68%

MCAS data analysis from the past three years illustrates a minimal overall increase in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the ELA MCAS in Grades 3-8. Data disaggregation indicates the largest disparity exists between two subgroups, students with IEPS and those in general education. Only 7% of students with an IEP are currently meeting/exceeding grade level expectations as compared to 42% of their peers. The achievement gap widens as students progress from grade three to grade eight. The second largest gap is with our English Learner students. The percentage of non-EL students meeting/exceeding grade level expectations is more than double the number of EL students. Both the Students with IEPs and EL students remained stagnant from spring 2017 to spring 2019.

Data disaggregated by race indicates that Multi-Race Non-Hispanic/Latino students made the largest increase (11%) in the percentage of students meeting/exceeding grade level expectations over the three-year span. The Black (8%), Hispanic/Latino (6%) and White (7%) sub-groups of students saw similar minimal increases.

ELA ~ % Meeting/Exceeding Expectations Grades 3-8 2017 2018 2019

Aggregate 28 33 34

African American/Black 21 28 29

Hispanic/Latino 22 27 28

Multi-Race Non-Hisp/Lat 32 37 43

White 34 39 41

Grade 10 2017 2018 2019\*\*

Aggregate 62 60 24

African-American/Black 69 52 15

Hispanic/Latino 49 47 15

Multi-Race Non-Hisp/Lat 75 92 39

White 75 78 37

\*\*High school transitioned to Next-Gen MCAS

Analysis of Math MCAS data from the past three years shows similar results to the ELA data. Overall, there has been a minimal increase in the percentage of students meeting/exceeding expectations in Grades 3-8 over the past three years (28% to 34%). Large disparities exist between Students with IEPS (9%) and non-IEP students (36%) who are meeting/exceeding expectations across all grade levels. The achievement gap increases significantly as students progress from 5th to 6th grade and beyond.

There is also a significant gap between EL and Non-EL students. The percentage of Non-EL students meeting/exceeding expectations is double the percentage of the "EL" students in Grades 3-8. Similar to ELA, the gap widens as the students progress from elementary to middle school with the largest disparity existing at the high school level where only 3% of EL students are meeting/exceeding grade level expectations as opposed to 36% of Non-EL students.

MATH ~ % Meeting/Exceeding Expectations

Grades 3-8 2017 2018 2019

Aggregate 29 30 32

Students w/ Disabilities 7 8 9

Non-Disabled 35 37 39

EL 19 19 17

Non-EL 32 34 36

Grade 10 2017 2018 2019

Aggregate 43 44 20

Students w/ Disabilities 10 11 5

Non-Disabled 52 54 25

EL 14 22 3

Non-EL 52 54 26

\*\* High school transitioned to Next-Gen MCAS

Data disaggregation by race illustrates that white students consistently outperform Black and Hispanic/Latino students in all grade levels.

MATH ~ % Meeting/Exceeding Expectations Grades 3-8 2017 2018 2019

Aggregate 29 30 32

African American/Black 21 26 25

Hispanic/Latino 23 25 26

Multi-Race Non-Hisp/Lat 33 34 36

White 34 35 38

Grade 10 2017 2018 2019\*\*

Aggregate 43 44 20

African-American/Black 45 34 17

Hispanic/Latino 32 37 13

Multi-Race Non-Hisp/Lat 60 58 29

White 55 56 31

\*\*High school transitioned to Next-Gen MCAS

Upon further data analysis, we note several trends in student performance across grade levels in both ELA and Math. Across the district, wide subgroup performance gaps generally begin as early as 3rd grade and continue throughout the middle school and into high school. These trends hold true for the aggregate, English learners, and students with IEPs. High school data indicates the largest disparity is between EL and non-EL students, with the most significant gap in 2019 when the transition to the ELA Next-Generation MCAS occurred.

Our data analysis leads us to summarize the following conclusions:

* Expansion of full-day pre-kindergarten can increase student readiness and performance, particularly for African American and Latino students, English learners and students with IEPs.
* Disparities in student subgroups performance are apparent as early as third grade and consistently widen as students progress through the grades.
* Our student subgroups face growing challenges in middle school, leading to increased disparities for black, Latino, English learners, and students with disabilities.
* In high school, performance gaps remain wide for students with disabilities and English learners

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

The Student Opportunity Act offers an opportunity for NBPS to commit to additional evidence-based programs to close opportunity and achievement gaps among our student subgroups. The Department has recommended that, based on our district's projected increase in Chapter 70 state aid and less a reasonable factor for inflation, NBPS should allocate a minimum of $6.1 million in Year 1 (FY21) incremental Chapter 70 funds towards evidence-based programs. Based on internal projections, we anticipate that incremental Chapter 70 funds for evidence-based programs in Years 2 and 3 will be in the range of an additional $6.1 and $8.1 million each year.

We intend to use our Student Opportunity Act funds to deepen programs, and intend to make multi-year, sustained commitments to these priority areas:

* Restructure and expand pre-kindergarten programming for 3 and 4-year-olds alongside a robust early literacy program for grades pre-K to 5
* Strengthen inclusion/co-teaching for students with disabilities and English learners
* Diversify the educator/administrator workforce through recruitment and retention strategies with an emphasis on hard-to- staff schools and positions
* Improve facilities to create healthy and safe school environments

In addition to the narrative below, the accompanying budget file provides a detailed FY21 budget for these programs totaling

$6,276,016.00 which is aligned with the recommended minimum. These investments are as follows:

$946,995.00 (expanded pre-kindergarten)

$3,205,000.00 (literacy programming)

$885,000.00 (inclusion and co-teaching)

$140,000.00 (retention and recruitment to diversify the workforce)

$1,129,021.00 (facilities upgrades for programming)

## 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)

Restructure and expand pre-kindergarten programming for 3 and 4-year-olds alongside a robust literacy program for grades pre-K-5.

Students impacted: Aligned with our work the last almost two years, we are currently revamping our Pre-kindergarten program. Through our citywide early childhood collaboration, we are focused on expanding seats. All classrooms serving four-year-old students will be converted to full day sessions and all classrooms serving three-year-old students will be half-

day sessions. Additional Pre-K classes will be created for the 2020-2021 school year which will increase our capacity to serve up to 120 additional four-year-old students. In addition, over the three years, we will reach approximately 4,500 students with high-quality early literacy programs in the elementary schools.

As a district, we see expanding high-quality Pre-K and reconfiguring literacy instruction as two complementary strategies for strengthening the teaching and learning process and improving student outcomes, particularly in ELA. We aim to increase access to and enrollment in Pre-K programs that will flow seamlessly into continued strong literacy instruction in grades K-5. In Year 1 (SY21), we will create 8 new classrooms of full-day pre-kindergarten at 3 elementary schools. We will also begin implementation of literacy programs in grades K-5.

* Our pre-kindergarten model will be structured based on the evidence-based model below:
* All Pre-K educators will hold a degree in early childhood education and will be prepared to support the needs of all incoming students
* We will further research and adopt high-quality curriculum materials that are aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and based on national models in early education.
* We will establish an extensive progress monitoring and assessment system, ensuring student needs are being identified and addressed in real time.
* Teachers will receive professional development throughout the year to enhance their practice, with expert coaches providing embedded support in the classroom.
* We will ensure all classroom settings are appropriate for Pre-K students and culturally responsive.
* Pre-K classrooms will feature small class sizes.

Research will also guide our implementation of an effective early literacy program, much of which is consistent with the pre-K structured components outlined above. Our literacy program will include:

* Establishing literacy teams, including school and district personnel, to ensure program alignment and success across classrooms.
* Adopting high-quality, evidence-based literacy curricular materials for all core content areas (including science and social studies), in pre-K and grades K-5
* Using valid assessments to identify instructional needs and to monitor progress.
* Differentiating, scaffolding, and accommodating the core curriculum to ensure equitable access for all students.
* Implementing a literacy based expanded learning program for students in grades K-5
* Implementing evidence-based interventions to address individual student needs.
* Providing initial and ongoing professional development and support to teachers, leaders, and support staff, through embedded instructional coaches and external PD providers.

Throughout the rest of this school year, we will begin planning for both the expansion of Pre-K and the initial implementation of a robust literacy program in grades K-5. Key activities will include establishing literacy teams, selecting high-quality instructional materials, hiring instructional coaches and interventionists, securing classroom equipment and materials, and providing teachers and school leaders with professional development to prepare them for implementation. We will also need to purchase specialized classroom furnishings for pre-K classrooms.

In Year 1 (FY21), in addition to ensuring a successful opening of new Pre-kindergarten seats, we will focus primarily on core instruction in pre-kindergarten and elementary literacy. With support from instructional coaches, educators will implement the adopted instructional materials, participate in ongoing curriculum-specific professional development, and utilize screening assessments to inform instruction.

In the following years, we will focus more intensively on selecting and utilizing appropriate interventions. Teachers will receive training on specific evidence-based interventions that complement the adopted instructional materials, while instructional coaches provide ongoing support to educators to implement interventions appropriately.

## Focus Area 2: Inclusion/co-teaching for students with disabilities and English learners (D and/or E)

Strengthen inclusion practices for students with disabilities and English Learners by implementing evidence-based co- teaching strategies in classrooms

Students impacted: New Bedford High School, 3 middle schools and 3 elementary schools will be the first cohort to be trained in evidence-based co-teaching strategies used in inclusion classrooms which will impact approximately 500 students with disabilities and English learners. The remaining elementary schools will receive training over Year 2 and Year 3, which will impact approximately an additional 1000 students.

To close achievement gaps for our students with disabilities and English learners, we will provide them with authentic opportunities to access and participate in the curriculum in the least restrictive environment. NBPS will begin a multi-year commitment to strengthen inclusion by providing teachers with professional development on inclusion practices and evidence-based coteaching strategies. The initial professional development will begin during the spring of 2020 and extend into Year 1. To support implementation in the schools, building principals and district administrators will receive professional development on inclusion practices and co-teaching strategies during the August Leadership Institute. The remaining elementary schools will receive training throughout Year 2 and Year 3.

Our inclusion/co-teaching model will be developed to include:

* Special education and English learner teachers will be licensed in the appropriate field and be prepared to meet the needs of all incoming students.
* Ongoing professional development and job embedded coaching focused on inclusion, co-teaching and collaboration.
* Planning periods for co-teachers to create universally designed lessons that incorporate opportunities for ongoing support in the least restrictive environment.
* Culturally responsive classroom settings that are appropriate for students with disabilities and English learners.
* Co-teach classrooms that feature classes with up to one-third of students needing services
* Differentiating, scaffolding, providing accommodations, and modifying the core curriculum to ensure equitable access for all students.

Throughout the remainder of this school year, we are planning for the initial implementation of a co-teach model in the high school, three middle schools and three feeder elementary schools in Year 1 (fall 2020) Key activities will include providing teachers and school leaders with professional development to prepare them for implementation, establishing co-teaching teams at each school, prioritizing students in the co-teach classrooms when creating the master schedule, and building in consistent co-planning time for teachers.

## Focus Area 3: Diversifying the educator/administrator workforce through recruitment and retention (D and/or H)

Evidence-based program #3: Diversify the educator/administrator workforce through recruitment and retention strategies with an emphasis on hard-to-staff schools and positions.

Students Impacted: New Bedford Public Schools enrolls over 13,200 students in Pre-K to grade 12. The diverse student body consists of (see previous data):

The teacher workforce consists of 6% Black, 6% Hispanic/Latin X and 1% multi-race non-Hispanic teachers. The majority (88%) of NBPS teachers are white. Years of research suggest that Black and Hispanic students benefit when paired with a teacher of their same race/ethnicity; however, a diverse teacher workforce will provide benefits to all students. Research indicates that when a student has a teacher that reflects their background and cultural interests, academic performance of students of color is boosted. This includes improved reading and math test scores, improved graduation rates, and increases in aspirations to attend college. NBPS is committed to recruiting a diverse workforce and focusing on strategies to retain them, especially in hard to fill positions such as Spanish speaking counselors, special education, math and science teachers.

Our recruitment efforts will include:

* Implicit bias training all staff members who are involved in hiring. This is to help to recognize implicit bias and to use interviewing techniques that reveal candidates' experience, knowledge, and strengths.
* Teacher Preparation Program Partnerships locally and including those serving large amounts of students of color to coordinate student teaching placements and vet candidates for hire before they graduate.
* Implementing "Grow Your Own" programs at the district level that recruit teacher candidates from nontraditional populations (e.g., high school students, paraprofessionals, and after-school program staff).
* Expanding the pool of potential teachers of color by identifying likely candidates prior to their senior year in high school and involving them in early college programs that aim both to cultivate the students' interest in teaching and to facilitate their admission to college

Our retention strategies will include:

* Offering comprehensive induction to support teachers of color in their first years of teaching, including matching new teachers with a veteran mentor teacher, providing seminars, classroom assistance, time to collaborate with other teachers, coaching and feedback from experienced teachers

## Focus Area 4: Facilities improvements to create healthy and safe school environments (J)

Students Impacted:

Specific focus will be on underserved students to prepare them to enter pathways that will ready them for college and careers (i.e., aviation, renewable energy) through our partnerships with several institutions including Cape Cod Community College, UMass-Dartmouth, Lesley University and Bristol Community College.

New Bedford Schools has the oldest stock of public schools in the Commonwealth. We continue to upgrade learning spaces and apply for MSBA support. There is a combination of several options that have a clear educational impact.

Special Education (enhance program offerings):

* Modify space to accommodate more programming to keep students within district (reduce out-of-district placements) which will also allow for funding to be repurposed within NBPS.
* Create programming within the district to better serve our school-age population and drastically reduce tuition and transportation to other districts and programs. As this initiative to return students to their neighborhood schools continues, there must be quality programming and welcoming space for them.

There are currently over 130 students with IEP's who are transported out of district to receive educational services as many of these programs don't exist in the district.

Technology (Innovation labs):

* Follow the ISTE standards for students and for educators
* Increase technology offerings (i.e., robotics, coding, in middle and elementary schools by reconfiguring classroom space.
* Increase opportunities for college and career readiness and pathways for early college.

**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 Achievement: Mathematics achievement as measured by average scaled scores on MCAS
* Student Growth: ELA mean student growth percentile (SGP)
* Student Growth: Mathematics mean student growth percentile (SGP)
* High School Completion: Four-year cohort graduation rate
* High School Completion: Extended engagement rate (5-year cohort grad rate plus percentage of students who are still enrolled)
* High School Completion: Annual dropout rate
* English Language Proficiency: Progress made by students towards attaining English proficiency (percentage of students meeting annual targets calculated to attain English proficiency in six years).
* Additional Indicators: Chronic absenteeism (percentage of students missing 10 percent or more of their days in membership)
* Post-secondary Success: Enrolled in college during the first year after high school
* Custom District Metric 1: Common Formative Assessments)
* Custom District Metric 2: Classroom Observations
* Custom District Metric 3: Learning Walks (school-based and district)

**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.*

New Bedford Public Schools recognizes that family engagement 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 the families of our students of color, our EL students, students from low-income backgrounds, and our students with disabilities. We apply our Family Engagement theoretical framework "the New Bedford 3 E's - Engage, Educate, and Empower" as our lens and focus that drives two main goals of creating and sustaining opportunities for two-way communication and family engagement that supports education and empowerment.

Outreach: Schools routinely conduct parent meetings and hold evening events. This year was the first time that NBPS had designated district-wide parent teacher conferences at each school. The superintendent participates in morning coffee meetings with parents at schools and has a scheduled lunch with students at least once per month.

Family Welcome Center serves as the central nervous system of New Bedford Public Schools. It welcomes parents/guardians into the school system as their first point of entry. Currently we have Parent Support Specialists who are focused on engaging and supporting all parents and working with community partners. Additionally, Wraparound Coordinators work with families and coordinate resources to support targeted interventions that address barriers to student success. All Parent Support Specialists are bilingual, and many of our Wraparound Coordinators are as well.

Family Institute of Student Success (FISS) serves to help parents/guardians navigate the school system. It provides information so that families can access resources. We working to expand the program which provides a 9-week (1.5 hours per week) course to engage, educate and empower parents. Since June 2019, 120 parents have successfully completed the program and we have expanded to a 3rd cohort with plans to address all schools over the next 2 – 3 years. Additionally, sessions are offered in multiple languages that represent our families and student body.

Family Engagement Centers: We have aligned and launched nine Family Engagement Centers at the following schools over the last several months: Gomes ES, Hayden-McFadden ES, Jacobs ES, Parker ES and Renaissance Elementary schools, our 3 middle schools, and New Bedford High School. These centers provide families with another opportunity for access and provides educational support, resources, computer access and home and community connection. They also work with community partners to bring workshops and opportunities directly to our families and schools.

The centers are staffed by a Parent Support Specialist or Wraparound Coordinator. The data we collect from our Family Engagement Centers drive what future workshops and interventions we offer. It also helps schools with planning their events. Our schools have developed Family Engagement Leadership teams that direct the New Bedford 3E's at the school level and are supported by our district led Family Engagement Leadership team. These teams are comprised of various community stakeholders including parents, community partners, family engagement and school-based leaders.

**Certifications**

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

New Bedford Public Schools collaborated and partnered with the New Bedford Educators Association, to lead our community engagement efforts and ensure broad and demographically representative participation from our community.

We collected more than 1,300 surveys in addition to feedback received in a variety of feedback sessions. There were several student meetings and parent meetings at individual schools and community organizations including the Boys and Girls Club, Buttonwood Park Senior Center and a series of district planning sessions that began last school year. Through these efforts, we engaged:

* Parents/guardians
* Staff (teachers, support staff, central office staff and volunteers)
* Students (all grade levels)
* Local non-profits and business organizations including the Chamber of Commerce
* Special Education Parent Advisory Council
* English Learner Parent Advisory Council
* Teachers Union Leadership (NBEA)

Additional individuals and community groups spoke during public comment at the March school committee meeting. Surveys were also conducted to garner input from those who could not attend focus groups. Primary concerns align with the goals in the NBPS Strategic Plan. They were consistent across stakeholders and are incorporated into the commitments in the plan for the Student Opportunity Act:

* Improve/increase the supports for subgroups, specifically students with disabilities and English learners
* Recruit and retain more diverse staff who reflect the backgrounds of the students/families
* Improve/enhance facilities
* Expand Pre-Kindergarten programs across the district
* Strengthen college and career readiness

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

Date of Approval: 03/09/2020