Student Opportunity Act Plan

Quaboag 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
* 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.*

As noted in our District Improvement Plan, Quaboag Regional School District (QRSD) strives to raise student achievement at all levels, however we recognize that not all student groups experience the same level of success. We currently collect and use data to plan and implement instructional strategies to improve our teaching and learning throughout the school year.

Based on a review of district data, QRSD identified achievement gaps in our low-income and students with disabilities subgroups on ELA MCAS. In third grade, a significant percentage of low-income and special education students are partially meeting expectations or not meeting expectations on the ELA MCAS. Among several other efforts, the District Improvement Plan includes the goal to build on early literacy work to create robust, language rich environments for all students.

The QRSD also notes that graduation and attendance rates for low-income students are lower than their peers. The District Improvement Plan aims to support opportunities for students to learn about career related options and gain career and technical skills. The low-income graduation rate is 89% and the attendance rate is 88%. We will adopt and improve career and innovation pathways to increase engagement. By offering innovative and real-world career course work, we hope to retain students and reinvigorate their commitment, thereby improving these rates.

The QRSD Student Opportunity Plan (SOP) will focus on improving graduation rates and attendance for low-income students. In addition, the SOP will target student achievement outcomes and district benchmarks for Pre-K through 6th grade for both low-income and students with disabilities. We are committed to closing the achievement and opportunity gaps for these student subgroups.

Finally, the Quaboag Regional District Improvement Plan includes improving and ensuring the social emotional wellness of students. Both elementary schools have identified students in need of interventions and supports based on the Devereaux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA). DESSA is used to screen students on eight Social Emotional Learning competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship skills, goal-directed behavior, personal responsibility, decision making, and optimistic thinking. 20% of students at Warren Community Elementary School and 6% of students at West Brookfield Elementary School have been identified as in need based on DESSA scores. The QRSD will continue to look at DESSA subgroup data and individual data to improve supports and interventions for subgroups and all students identified as in need of additional social emotional services.

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

## 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)

Enhanced Core Instruction

Currently, the QRSD offers a half-day, pre-kindergarten program in two of our elementary schools. Following a district review this year, we found that one elementary preschool was filled and had a waiting list, while the second elementary school had open slots. The QRSD will offer expanded access to high quality, pre-kindergarten (SOA D, F, G) by creating a regional program that will increase access for low-income students and students with disabilities by increasing physical classroom space and the number of preschool classes available in our rural, low-income communities. The Enhanced Core Instruction program touches on several SOA program categories including career technical education (SOA I), as QRSD plans to create an Early Education and Child Care program where students will work in the expanded pre-kindergarten during the school day and earn college credit.

Improving facilities (SOA J) at the Quaboag Regional Middle School, where the pre-kindergarten program will be housed, will create a healthy and safe school environment (Conditions for Student Success, SOA J) for these students. Activity areas will be accessible and modified/adapted to accommodate the needs of children with disabilities. The program will have access for persons with disabilities either by compliance with the design standards in 521 CMR (Architectural Access Board) or by compliance with the requirements of 102 CMR 7.26 Office of Child Care Services Regulations on Physical Access.

In addition, the preschool teachers will visit student homes (Conditions for Student Success, SOA E) to foster increased family engagement, collaboration and parental input. Services to support holistic student needs will be increased (Targeted Student Supports, SOA C and D) through our partnership will the community-based providers, the Behavioral Health Network and Valley Human Services. Students with identified behavioral and social emotional needs will be able to see a clinician and/or therapeutic mentor on-site at the school and students identified by the Devereaux Student Strengths Assessment will be able to participate in small, social skills group with a certified counselor (Conditions for Student Success: Community partnerships for in-school enrichment and wrap-around services, SOA C).

This year, one of our pre-kindergarten teachers participated in state-sponsored professional development on the Preschool and Kindergarten Standards in Social-Emotional Development and Approaches to Play and Learning (Conditions for Student Success, SOA C and D). One of the most important tenets of our improved and expanded pre-kindergarten program will be to ensure that students have access to activities that promote active, hands-on learning, as well as, many chances for meaningful engagement, and student-teacher and peer communication while implementing the Massachusetts Early Childhood Program Standards for 3 and 4 year olds, the Preschool and Kindergarten Standards in Social-Emotional Development and the Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences. Learning experiences will support problem solving, critical thinking, communication and social skills within a meaningful context for the child.

Research has shown that high-quality pre-kindergarten programs benefit disadvantaged children academically and socially all the way into adulthood. High quality preschool is essential for our students' present and future success, as QRSD serves West Brookfield and Warren, two economically disadvantaged populations of 38% and nearly 50% respectively. Children who are at risk for school failure benefit the most from strong early education.

The crux of process quality is an emphasis that actual experiences take place in educational settings, such as positive student-teacher and peer interactions, managing child behavior in a positive manner and child activities such as block building, dramatic play, art, music, science, technology, mathematics, book reading, writing, manipulatives, woodworking, and sensory play (e.g., sand, water, tactile activities). Process quality is generally gauged by evaluating student experiences in centers and the classroom as a whole. The teachers, parents and Director of Student Support Services will continually assess the students and pre-kindergarten program. As activities and interactions are rated higher by teachers and administration in these reviews, students tend to produce higher language and math output, as well as social skills. The QRSD will continue to improve curriculum, instruction, materials, relationships with parents, health and safety routines and the room environment. Structure will be supportive, routines predictable and transitions smooth. Staff will relate fairly and equitably to all children and adults.

Staff to student ratios are another indicator used as a structural barometer of a high-quality prekindergarten program. The program will have the number of staff necessary to ensure adequate group supervision at all times and to provide individual attention to children to promote their physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. The QRSD will keep the regional, prekindergarten program class sizes small which will provide our students with increased support, greater positive interactions between staff and peers, and improved individualized learning opportunities. A minimum of two staff will be in every classroom and the proportion of children on Individual Education Programs (IEPs) will be less than 50% of the total group size. Our teachers will be certified to work with students with and without disabilities, as will our classroom paraprofessionals. Also, for students whose IEPs call for it, we will have 1:1 para support as required.

Our 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds will be formally assessed three times a year, in November, March, and June. This assessment will examine students' knowledge in the following areas: Numeral Recognition, Shape Identification/Recognition, Letter Identification, Writing First Name, Copy

Writing Strokes, Drawing of Basic Body Parts, and Cutting. Student assessment will be ongoing, systematic, extracted from natural play activities, and cumulative. These assessments will be used to plan for and modify the instructional program as needed.

Additionally, we will administer Performance Based Assessments (PBA) to children approaching their third birthday who require special education services. This assessment documents activities in which children engage on a daily basis. It is flexible enough to reflect individual academic achievement and designed to evaluate many elements of learning and development not captured by standardized tests.

The QRSD pre-kindergarten program will continue to collaborate with the Collaborative for Educational Services (CES) a community-based provider. Our preschool program will continue to participate in an early education council, the Quaboag Council, which is supported by the Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Grant. Along with local librarians, daycare, and private preschool providers, the preschool will meet three times a year to discuss and assess the needs of the youngest children in our community. The CES and Quaboag Council will continue to offer parent child workshops, home visiting programs for young children and families, as well as other resources.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount: enter number, do not use the $ character** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **new playground at Quaboag** | **47227** | **Operations and Maintenance** |
| **2** | **building maintenance (sinks)** | **20736** | **Operations and Maintenance** |
| **3** | **grounds maintenance (fencing)** | **3971** | **Operations and Maintenance** |
| **4** | **general supplies** | **38276** | **Instructional Materials, Equipment, and Technology** |
| **5** | **heat pipes, concrete, control wiring** | **6400** | **Operations and Maintenance** |
| **6** | **new doors, paint, lumber, concrete** | **33224** | **Operations and Maintenance** |

## Focus Area 2: Research-based early literacy programs in pre-kindergarten and early elementary grades (E, F, and G)

Research-based early literacy programs in pre-kindergarten and early elementary grades (SOA E, F and G) and talent development: Strategic scheduling to allow common planning time for teachers (SOA B)

As indicated in our District Improvement Plan and School Improvement Plans, teachers in grades K-3 have participated in the DESE Early Literacy Grant Program for the past three years. Teachers create their professional S.M.A.R.T. goals around the District Improvement Plans. Since 2017, teachers have had a new focus each year that was aligned with the 2017 ELA standards. Focus areas have been Dialogic Reasoning, Vocabulary, and Creating Independent Writers. Other district current literacy initiatives include: walkthroughs and classroom observations, meeting in grade-level teams to discuss classroom observations, analyzing literacy achievement data, enacting a K3 Early Literacy Professional Learning Community, and implementing the Reading, Speaking, Listening and Language standards. Teachers participate in learning walkthroughs monthly throughout the year at West Brookfield Elementary School. Our focus this school year is Formative Feedback which was chosen from the DESE Learning Walkthrough Implementation Guide. The rubric we use during our walkthroughs is supported Universal Design for Learning (UDL). This provides a framework for the maximization of learning opportunities for students with disabilities and all learnings with varying needs. In addition, teachers share best practices across grade levels at faculty meetings and have daily common planning time (SOA B). They are provided with 45 min/day of planning time within each grade as well as vertical common planning.

The QRSD will continue and deepen our work in early literacy by working with a consultant who will coach teachers in understanding the changes in the K-3 writing standards and how these standards are part of a vertical learning progression aligned with Reading, Speaking and Listening, and Language standards. Teachers will receive support in learning how to integrate the standards in unit and lesson design, specifically in the three broad categories: opinion, informative/explanatory and narrative, and the elements of effective writing in each category. In addition, the teachers will learn how to integrate standards across other content areas (SOA E).

The early literacy consultant will promote the early literacy goal of creating independent writers through the following practices (SOA E):

* Providing expertise on how to integrate writing in the ELA block.
* Modeling key instructional practices for writing across all disciplines.
* Help evaluate strengths and needs in writing curriculum, instruction, and assessments through data analysis, classroom observations and analysis of writing curriculum.
* Assisting in the determination of specific interventions for struggling students.
* Creating continuity of instruction vertically, across grade levels.
* Providing school-based professional development on high quality, integrated, standards-aligned instruction to further evolve independent writers.

The school-based administrators will continue as active members of the Early Literacy Vertical Team and will promote follow- through to ensure transfer of content, vertical alignment, and implementation of engagement practices. Information will be disseminated and implemented in grades K-3 through the following practices: At grade-level meetings teachers will review the strategies for increasing student writing skills; the Early Literacy Team will model new classroom strategies and lessons for the other K-3 teachers to observe; teachers will video tape lessons to use for professional development to promote implementation. At faculty meetings, the Early Literacy Vertical Team will: demonstrate and/or discuss writing protocols at staff meetings, and discuss levels of writing and writing strategies. In addition, teachers will participate in learning walkthroughs and observations with the school-based administrator.

Over the past two years, QRSD supported West Brookfield Elementary School and Warren Community Elementary School by providing time and resources needed for the Early Literacy Vertical Teams to effectively work on planning, implementing standards and analyzing results. Substitute teachers were provided to enable teachers to model lessons and attend grant required state meetings, literacy institutes, and regional meetings. Administration communicated to all staff that the early literacy work is a high priority by included it in the District Improvement Plan.

An Early Literacy Action Plan has been created and will be updated by the end of SY20. The action plan was developed with the help of the early literacy consultant hired by DESE. The plan will guide data-based decision-making moving forward to continue to improve early literacy in pre-kindergarten and early elementary grades.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount (enter number, do not use the $ character)** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **PD for staff** | **78975** | **Professional Development** |
| **2** | **evidence based materials** | **10000** | **Instructional Materials, Equipment, and Technology** |

Focus Area 3: Expanded access to career-technical education, including "After Dark" district-vocational partnerships and innovation pathways reflecting local labor market priorities (I)

Expanded access to career-technical education, including Innovation Pathways reflecting local labor market priorities (SOA category I)

The goal of the Project Lead the Way (PLTW) Biomedical Sciences Innovation Pathway is to build a pathway that engages our Quaboag Regional High School (QRHS) students and enables them to learn and grow through a challenging learning environment where PLTW students become school leaders and teachers become engaged as PLTW champions. We have this mission playing out in our 100% participation PLTW Launch school, West Brookfield Elementary and we want to expand this type of learning to the high school. The pathway will build on the 2-years of PLTW: Gateway currently implemented in the QRSD middle school. The project-based nature of PLTW will allow students to become thinkers and creators, visionaries and makers poised for careers in the medical field. The universal design will allow us to reach all learners including low-income students and students with disabilities. By year three, our high school goals are to see an 2% increase in our 4year graduation rate and a 1% decrease in our dropout rate as students begin to see the real-world relevance in their education and gain career-technical competencies. PLTW aligns with our goal to improve critical thinking skills, collaboration, communication and creativity and science MCAS performance.

The Biomedical Science Innovation Pathway will align to labor market demand in two of the top regional priority industries; Healthcare and Social Assistance and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, as indicated by the Central Mass Workforce Investment Board (CMWIB). The occupations in this field cited by the CMWIB Regional Blueprint include nursing, pharmacy and direct care workers, and bio-manufacturing technicians. The priority and critical industries in the Blueprint have the most significant workforce challenges. Life sciences employment is anticipated to grow by 5.68% by 2024 in our region. Warren is located on the rural fringe of Worcester and Hampden counties. Industry labor market projections indicate that scientific and technical services will increase 2.2% to 16.6% over the next 10 years in these areas. Keeping students on the cutting edge of STEM instruction will prepare them for the current job market and the rapidly growing science and technology careers in the future. The PLTW Biomedical Science pathway also aligns with the labor market goal to expand Career Technical Education for priority and critical industries and occupations and to increase exposure in secondary education to high priority industries.

The proposed program aligns with The Central MA Regional Workforce Blueprint in that it aims to create a pipeline for in- demand jobs by creating "a career pathway that includes education and training, credential attainment and work-based learning (OJT, internships, apprenticeships)" in the Warren and West Brookfield region in the priority industry Healthcare & Social Assistance. In the region, health occupations are facing some of the most significant employee shortages. The plan for Quaboag Regional's program is to help meet this need by "strengthening articulation agreements between regional partners to ensure students will have access to education and training linked together to scaffold their success" and meet the challenge of the "high unemployment rate of the region's youth." In addition, the region "faces the challenge of finding and retaining talent due to the aging of our workforce, lack of work-readiness/social emotional skills" amongst others (Central MA Regional Workforce Blueprint, March 2018).

Furthermore, the proposed program aligns with the Opportunities for All: The Baker/Polito Strategy and Plan for Making Massachusetts Great Everywhere in that it addresses labor and workforce development through career training and educational readiness. Quaboag Regional is on the rural fringe of Worcester County and plans "to leverage their unique assets that are consistent with state goals… with efforts to advance rural interests." By creating a partnership with businesses, community college and private actors, the project will "drive regional economic opportunities" by "aligning workforce training efforts with employer needs."

In order to recruit traditional underrepresented populations, including low income students and students with disabilities, QRSD will use the following key strategies to ensure participation:

(1) take the time to build relationships and establish trust among the target students (girls, low-income, Hispanic and African Americans, LGBTQ, and disabled);

(2) ensure members of the target audience are involved as active partners in project planning and development;

(3) acknowledge and draw upon participants' cultural identity/practices;

(4) integrate experiences that are culturally relevant and personally meaningful to participants:

(5) utilize bilingual/bicultural facilitators to support programming, as appropriate;

(6) emphasize the program's educational merit and integrate a STEM career focus; and

(7) identify potential barriers to participation and develop strategies to overcome those obstacles. QRSD plans to build a support program that gives students opportunities to network, socialize, participate in showcases, present projects, join study groups, receive tutoring, peer-to-peer support and mentoring groups. "These types of preparation opportunities help socialize students within a discipline, promoting academic success…" (The National Academies Press).

The Innovation Pathway will include the following courses: PLTW Principles of Biomedical Science, Certified Nursing Assistant certification (Year 1) PLTW Medical Interventions and AP Biology; (Year 2) and PLTW Biomedical Innovations; (Year 3) (SOA F, curriculum and equipment that are aligned with the statewide curriculum frameworks). The Principles of Biomedical Science course provides an introduction to biomedical science through exciting hands-on projects and problems. Students investigate concepts of biology and medicine as they explore health conditions including heart disease, diabetes, sickle-cell disease, hypercholesterolemia, and infectious diseases. They will determine the factors that led to the death of a fictional woman as they sequentially piece together evidence found in her medical history and her autopsy report. Students will investigate lifestyle choices and medical treatments that might have prolonged the woman's life and demonstrate how the development of disease is related to changes in human body systems.

Medical interventions allows students to investigate the variety of interventions involved in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of disease as they follow the lives of a fictitious family. A "How-To" manual for maintaining overall health and homeostasis in the body, the course will explore how to prevent and fight infection, how to screen and evaluate the code in our DNA, how to prevent, diagnose, and treat cancer, and how to prevail when the organs of the body begin to fail. Through these scenarios' students will be exposed to the wide range of interventions related to immunology, surgery, genetics, pharmacology, medical devices, and diagnostics.

In the capstone course, Medical Innovations, students apply their knowledge and skills to answer questions or solve problems related to the biomedical sciences. Students design innovative solutions for the health challenges of the 21st century as they work through progressively challenging open-ended problems, addressing topics such as clinical medicine, physiology, biomedical engineering, and public health. They have the opportunity to work on an independent project and may work with a mentor or advisor from a university, hospital, physician's office, or industry. Throughout the course, students are expected to present their work to an adult audience that may include representatives from the local business and healthcare community We have built a strong, community-based team to support this pathway which includes the MassHire Central Region Workforce Board, River East School-to-Career, the Quaboag Chamber of Commerce, Holyoke Community College, the Collaborative for Educational Services and Baystate Mary Lane Hospital .

Partners

Baystate Health's mission is to improve the health of the people in our communities every day, with quality and compassion. With a focus on quality, safety, value, and patient experience, Baystate is not only a keystone of our region – it is also a national leader in health care. Baystate Health is the largest health care organization in western Massachusetts. Quaboag Regional High School is 5 miles from Baystate Mary Lane Outpatient Center and 8 miles from Baystate Wing Hospital. Both are in need of nurses and aides.

The River East School-to-Career, Inc. partnership brings together schools, businesses, and organizations to create exciting career exploration opportunities for students. Their aim is to help students make informed decisions regarding their career and educational goals. Over the past five years, more than three hundred businesses and organizations supported School-to- Career programs by providing jobs, internships, co-operative education placements, and job shadow experiences for students.

Holyoke Community College (HCC) was the first two-year college in the Commonwealth and is widely recognized as a leader in high-quality, affordable pathways to transfer or immediate entry into the workforce. HCC serves a diverse community with nearly one hundred degree and certificate programs, and online, blended, evening, and Saturday classes. HCC partners with schools through articulation agreements and will provide expertise in building the career programs through MassTransfer courses and CNA courses and supporting students transition into college.

The Director of the Collaborative for Educational Services' Perkins Consortium assists nine school-to-work team members in the development of internship programs, career development workshops, and use of funds for career skill development. The Collaborative for Educational Services is a non-profit educational service agency, committed to reaching and educating learners of all ages, and experienced in working with educators to help students learn and succeed. They partner with students, families, schools and districts, educators; and communities across Massachusetts and in the region to create and improve educational opportunities both in and out of the classroom

The QRSD is proud that our community has already begun to support our endeavors through donating funds and nursing equipment. By year two, we expect to see an 2% increase in our 4-year graduation rate and a 1% decrease in our dropout rate as students see the real-world relevance in their education and gain real world competencies and career certifications, and earn college credit.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount (enter number, do not use the $ character)** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **PD for staff** | **2400** | **Professional Development** |
| **2** | **lab equipment & supplies** | **15618** | **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)
* 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
* 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: DESSA (SEL measure)
* Custom District Metric 2: DIBELS

**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.*

QRSD has a pre-school parent liaison who sets up home visits and begins a report template which includes developmental history information. The liaison visits the home when Early Intervention needs are present. She establishes a relationship with the family and explains the assessment process. The pre-school teachers also do a home visit prior to the start of school. They offer home visits to new families to establish a relationship with the student as well as the family. This visit is optional – if parent declines, a private school visit is offered.

Pre-school encourages parental involvement through the Early Childhood Partnership with the Community Partnership Council which consists of community members, day care providers, preschool staff, and parents who are interested in the future of quality services for Warren, West Brookfield, and surrounding communities.

During the school year, parents are welcome once a month to join their child for lunch. They are encouraged to walk through the lunch line and experience what it is like for their child to eat in the cafeteria with friends each day. Approximately 50 parents attend each month.

We have partnered with BHN (Behavioral Health Network) this year in order to better support our students and their social emotional needs.

In addition, the 21st Century Community Learning Center at our 46% low-income elementary school has hired a family engagement coordinator to ensure frequent communication with families about 21st CCLC students. We will be surveying families to better understand family/guardian needs to offer support groups and a parent/child book club is already in the planning. Our current family engagement plan involves the following:

* Beginning of year informational orientation night
* Monthly newsletter to parents in their home language
* Student gallery nights to display and present projects at the end of each session
* Parent/grandparent/chaperone expert visits and/or show and tell
* Assessing parent needs and reducing barriers to parent involvement, supporting families, communicating and building trusting relationships, hiring and developing a family focused staff, and building linkages across individuals and organizations
* Developing consistent communication with targeted students' families in order to exchange information about their children's interests and needs at home and school and during out-of-school time
* Increasing family awareness of school calendar and activities that would complement what happens in the school day and afterschool
* Identifying and developing needed resource materials such as strategy tip sheets.

**Certifications**

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

The Quaboag Regional School District disseminated a Student Opportunity Act Survey to the Quaboag School Community in February/March 2020. A public hearing on the Student Opportunity Act was held on March 9. The Student Opportunity Act was also discussed with each School Council. The Quaboag School Committee voted to unanimously approve the Student Opportunity Act on March 16, 2020.

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

Date of Approval: 03/16/2020