Student Opportunity Act Plan

Reading

# 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.*

* English learners and former English learners
* 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)
* African American/Black students
* Hispanic or Latinx students

*The rationale for selecting these student subgroups.*

As referenced in our District Improvement Plan, our theory of action states that If the Reading Public School District strategically allocates its human and financial resources to support high quality teaching, prioritizes a commitment to the academic, social, and emotional needs of our students, emphasizes the hiring and support of effective staff who have the capacity to collaboratively learn, thoughtfully analyzes measurements of school performance and provides differentiated support, then students will make effective progress and be appropriately challenged, graduating from high school ready for college, career, and life as contributing citizens in a global society. Additionally, in our analysis of our district data, our students with disabilities, High Needs, English Language Learner, African American, and Hispanic students are not as successful on the MCAS outcomes as their peers. Our analysis also shows that if a student is in more than one of these subgroups, the increased likelihood that they are not as successful as their peers.

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

The Reading Public Schools currently has the following three District Improvement Plan goals:

Strategic Objective A-Redesigning School (2020-2021 School Year)

Based on our work since March, 2020, the school district will build a foundation of teaching and learning practices, infrastructure changes, assessment practices, and operations efficiencies to prepare schools for current conditions and future challenges in a post-pandemic world. This strategic objective may be extended based on the trajectory of the pandemic.

Strategic Objective B-Coherent Instructional Systems (2020-2023 School Years)

Based on qualitative and quantitative data analysis, the school district will evaluate and refine standards-based instructional systems to meet the needs of all learners. Please note that state standardized data will look different and may be less available in a post pandemic world.

Strategic Objective C-Supportive and Safe Learning Environment (2020-2023 School Years)

Based on quantitative and qualitative data analysis, the school district will review our equity and social justice practices, analyze student social emotional growth, and refine systems of support to ensure a healthy and successful learning community while meeting the unique needs of students.

## Focus Area 1: Supporting educators to implement high-quality, aligned curriculum (E and F)

Supporting educators to implement high-quality, aligned curriculum (E and F). Access to high-quality, standards-aligned curricular materials is a critical component of the student learning experience, with growing evidence that curricular materials matter particularly for those students experiencing opportunity and performance gaps.

A recent study of student assignments revealed that students spent the bulk of their time in school completing assignments that were not grade-appropriate, the result of materials that were not standards-aligned and expectations that were too low. The report observes: "Students spent more than 500 hours per school year on assignments that weren't appropriate for their grade and with instruction that didn't ask enough of them—the equivalent of six months of wasted class time in each core subject" (TNTP, 2018). In classrooms where students were given curriculum materials and assignments that were appropriate for their grade, the researchers concluded they gained nearly two months of additional learning compared to their peers (TNTP, 2018).

Additional evidence suggests that providing teachers with access to high-quality, standards-aligned curricular materials can prompt improvement in student outcomes, including effects that are: 1) comparable to over half a year of additional learning (Kane et al., 2016); 2) about 1.5 times the difference between an average teacher and one at the 75th percentile (Chingos & Whitehurst, 2012), and 3) greater than the difference between a new teacher and one with three years of experience (Kane, 2016). We need to ensure all students have access to grade-appropriate, standards-aligned curriculum.

As we align our curriculum to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, we will be focusing our curriculum purchases, professional development, and instructional practices in the following areas over the next three years:

* Continue implementation of a seven-year curriculum overview and examination cycle in all curriculum areas.
* Develop and implement a five-year special education program review cycle.
* Develop entrance and exit criteria for students entering district special education programs as appropriate.
* Completion of curriculum guides, PreK-12.
* Complete implementation of social studies curriculum standards.
* Review and pilot curriculum material in Grades K-6 mathematics.
* Commit resources to focused and aligned professional development opportunities on meeting the needs of diverse learners for administrators, teachers and support staff.
* Implement Universal Design for Learning across the school district.
* Work with TAP Committee to review new teacher evaluation rubrics for implementation in 2021-2022 school year.
* Select and implement a high-quality universal screening assessment for K-5 students in literacy and mathematics.
* Using DESE guidelines develop and implement a process on Early Literacy Screening.
* Implement revised elementary standards-based report card.
* Develop and implement a plan to improve literacy skills, K-5, with an emphasis on early literacy skills in Grades K-3.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount: enter number, do not use the $ character** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **Curriculum Material** | **194,050** | **Instructional Materials, Equipment, and Technology** |
| **2** | **Professional Development Expenses** | **92,921** | **Professional Development** |

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

Researchers believe that it is possible for over 90 percent of children to become skillful readers by grade 3, if they receive appropriate instruction (Castles, Rastle, and Nation, 2018; Foorman, 2001). Providing such instruction to meet the needs of all diverse learners in a school requires a suite of instructional practices that enable teachers to provide high-quality, differentiated instruction. These practices include: adoption of high-quality instructional materials, use of valid assessments, provision of interventions to students who need them, and ongoing professional development and learning for teachers.

High-Quality Program Components

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

A comprehensive approach to early literacy begins with adoption of high-quality literacy core curricular materials that have evidence (e.g., CURATE, EdReports) demonstrating that they are aligned to standards and to research-based reading instruction (Kane et al., 2016, National Reading Panel, 2000). A valid, reliable, normed assessment for early reading is also necessary to track all students' progress, to identify students at risk for reading difficulties, and to intervene when necessary (Fuchs, Fuchs, and Compton, 2012). When data indicates that a student is not making adequate reading progress, appropriately trained staff should provide research-based interventions that match the student's learning needs (Gersten et. al., 2009). Finally, research clearly points to the need for strong content-area learning (in subjects such as science, history/social science, and the arts), as these content areas support the knowledge development that is the backbone of reading and writing ability (see Knowledge Matters for detailed research citations). Thus, a comprehensive approach to early literacy will include adoption of strong content-area curriculum and training for teachers.

Staffing and Scheduling

It is often necessary for schools to make structural changes that enable a comprehensive, research-based approach to early literacy. Some schools may need to revamp the schedule so that sufficient time is available to implement all components of a high-quality core literacy program and content area learning (such as mathematics, science, social studies, and the arts), with time also allocated for supplemental interventions, ongoing collaborative professional learning, and planning by teacher teams. Schools may need to hire additional qualified staff to provide interventions to students or to enable the scheduling described above.

Professional Learning and Leadership

Professional learning is a key aspect of implementing evidence-based early literacy practices. Both school leaders and teachers benefit from training on the implementation of high-quality curricular materials, including in-depth initial training and ongoing implementation support (Blazar et al, 2019). PreK-3 teachers also benefit from training on early reading content pedagogy in order to understand and respond to individual student literacy needs. This training is particularly impactful when a high-quality, evidence-based curriculum is in place.

In our District goals for the 2020-2023 school years, there is a specific goal on literacy instruction, with a focus on special education literacy. The goal is as follows:

During the 2020-2023 School Years, we will improve our literacy evaluation process, enhance our reading instructional strategies, and structure our progress monitoring more effectively for students who are struggling readers. Based on our work, we will see progress as evidenced by reviewing previous case studies of students who struggled with Tier 2 interventions and comparing the following: an increase in identifying struggling readers earlier, students demonstrating growth on their IEP literacy goals, and fewer out of district placements with specific learning disabilities.

The steps taken to address this goal over the next three years are as follows:

 1. Training with Dr. Orkin and Crafting Minds for Team Chairs and School Psychologists, Reading Specialists, Special Education and Curriculum Administration and selected principals consisting of:

* Professional development virtual workshops regarding characterization, morphology, categorization, executive functioning, and using learning standard entry points.
* Research and align a consistent battery of sensitive reading assessments for initial evaluations & reevaluations to target specific areas of reading (i.e., phonological awareness, decoding, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary) & use results to drive specific reading instruction.

 2. Select and implement a high-quality universal screening assessment for K-5 students.

 3. Using DESE guidelines develop and implement a process on Early Literacy Screening.

 4. Determine & implement consistent progress monitoring practices for various specialized reading instructional practices (i.e., phonological awareness, decoding, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary).

 5. Identify specific reading benchmark assessments to be given 2-3 times a year & train staff how to administer the benchmark assessments for the Bridge program.

 6. Coach staff to chart & share progress with families & use it to drive instructional practices

 7. Initial Training in early literacy as part of the Crafting Minds Training of Sped Teachers, Reading Specialists, SLPs, School Psychologists, Team Chairs, Principals, and Administrators. It introduces the subtypes frameworks, related assessments, and works through case studies. In addition, there is a module that addresses Orthographic Mapping and trains participants in the use of the phonological awareness screening test (PAST) and instructional routines to build students' sight word recognition

 8. Order Reading materials to ensure that appropriate target instructional practices are utilized at every level and aligned with regular education literacy practices.

 9. Provide appropriate training to staff in how to implement new reading programs and assessments.

10. Work with the District SEPAC to develop parent trainings in the basics of reading.

11. Implement an evaluation protocol based on the Crafting Minds training to be completed by the special education team when a specific learning disability in the area of reading is suspected or part of a three year re-evaluation.

12. Hire a Special Education Literacy Coach which will be focused on improving reading practices in all special education programs and settings.

13. Implementation & Coaching with Crafting Minds – In the second year staff examine the use and familiarity with key assessments (addition training is available as necessary in the administration and interpretation of the CTOPP, RAN, TOWRE & GORT). School-based coaching will also be provided to support the use of the graphic organizer for newly assessed and existing students with reading goals. Coaching can extend into instruction. One key goal of this year is to collect school-based and district-wide data regarding the subtypes of student with reading goals in order to make data-driven decisions when investing in curricula, training, and supplemental resources.

14. Sustainability & Connecting to General Education with Crafting Minds - Over the course of the third year responsibility for interpretation will be released to teams. General Educators will receive training in common learning profiles, needs, and accommodations/modifications for students with reading goals. Ongoing coaching for those delivering small group and specialized instruction as necessary.

15. Communicate updates regularly via meetings and newsletters.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount (enter number, do not use the $ character)** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **Professional Development-Regular Day** | **92,921** | **Professional Development** |
| **2** | **Professional Development-Special Education** | **15,000** | **Professional Development** |

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

A growing body of educational research supports the positive impacts of teachers of color on short- and long-term academic outcomes of students of color. Specifically, the research finds that having a single teacher of color can boost academic achievement, high school graduation rates, and college enrollment for students of color (Gershenson et al., 2017; Cherng and Halpin, 2016). In light of these findings, recruiting and retaining a diverse and effective educator workforce is a promising strategy for districts.

In addition, a growing body of educational research (Griffin and Tackie, 2016, Carver-Thomas, 2018, Dixon, et al., 2019) demonstrates the importance and need to develop inclusive school environments for students and staff to support the retention of a diverse teacher workforce. The research indicates that inclusive school environments include characteristics such as:

* Shared or collective decision-making
* Opportunities for growth and development such as mentorship programs and access to professional development
* Cultivation of relationships with students and families to strengthen the school community

Our teacher and administrator workforce does not mirror our student population, especially with our students of color. In the FY21 budget, an HR/Payroll administrative assistant has been added which will allow our Human Resources Director to allocate more time to recruitment and retention. This includes the development of a three-year induction program for all teachers new to Reading.

Our district has developed a goal as part of the District Improvement Plan which states the following:

During the 2020-21 school year, the Reading Public Schools will begin a three-year plan to develop and implement a talent diversification and leadership development strategy. The success of this plan will be evidenced by an increase in pipeline development, recruitment, and retention of staff of color. Through the implementation of this plan, we will see an increase in staff of color by 100% (6 to 12) by the end of the 2022-23 school year and an increase in Reading staff who have been promoted from a teaching position to a leadership position (i.e. curriculum coordinator, department chair, assistant principal, team chair, principal, central office administrator). Currently, we have 10 former Reading teachers who are in leadership positions.

The action steps in the plan are as follows:

1. Hire a Human Resources Director
2. As part of entry plan, HR Director will review hiring and recruitment practices through interviews, focus group sessions, and surveys.
3. Create a diversity hiring committee consisting of teachers, paraeducators, and administrators.
4. Develop a value proposition for potential staff of color. The value proposition is a set of attributes that candidates and employees perceive as the value they gain through employment in an organization. These include tangibles (benefits, compensation, career pathways) and intangibles (culture, support, system, and mission).
5. Conduct an internal audit of our current talent management process which includes an assessment of diversification for pipeline development, recruitment, and retention.
6. Pipeline Development
* Increase the number of student teachers in the district and student teachers who are individuals of color, PreK-12.
* Increase the number of paraeducators in our district who are individuals of color.
* Provide paraeducators with Bachelor's Degrees access to teacher preparation professional development.
* Develop education coursework for Seniors who may be interested in pursuing a teaching degree.
1. Recruitment
* Prioritize recruitment through Linkedin, Talent Ed, Indeed, and other recruiting websites.
* Audit all recruitment materials, including the website, job descriptions, and job postings to ensure the district's commitment to diversity is clearly communicated.
* Identify and participate in job fairs that focus on recruiting teachers of color.
1. Retention
* Conduct qualitative data gathering through surveys or focus groups with teachers of color to ensure that they feel valued.
* Use the educator evaluation process and the mentor program to support teacher’s progress.
* Publicly recognize teachers.
* Continue to provide teachers opportunities for dialog and discussion through open door policy, staff forums, and office hours.
1. Based on the audit, adjust our talent practices and create a long-term diversification strategy.
* Develop an Aspiring Leadership Program for Teachers.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount (enter number, do not use the $ character)** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **1.0 FTE HR/Payroll Administrative Assistant** | **60,000** | **Administration** |
| **2** | **Mentor Stipends** | **66,500** | **Professional Development** |

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

Facilities improvements to create healthy and safe school environments (J). Over the next few years, the Reading Public Schools will be improving the safety and security of their current school facilities and exploring options to increase classroom space for preschool, full day kindergarten, enrollment increases, and in-district special education programs. Below are some of the projects that are being implemented.

* Three new modular classrooms at Birch Meadow Elementary School were added in October, 2020 to address enrollment and increased enrollment in special education programs (FY21).
* Implementation of security enhancements to improve the safety and security of our facilities for our students and staff (FY21 and 22). The security features will improve access controls and cameras at school buildings while maintaining the learning environment for all students.
* In FY20, an elementary school space and enrollment study was completed which presented several options to solve the growing need for educational space to address programmatic needs of full day kindergarten, in-district special education programs, and preschool. This will be an ongoing community discussion over the next several months.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount (enter number, do not use the $ character)** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **Modular Classrooms** | **1,250,000** | **Operations and Maintenance** |
| **2** | **Town and School Building and Security Project** | **4,500,000** | **Operations and Maintenance** |

**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: Extended engagement rate (5 year cohort grad rate plus percentage of students who are still enrolled)
* Additional Indicators: Percentage of 11th and 12th graders completing at least one DESE-identified advanced coursework
* Custom District Metric 1: Accountability Classification
* Custom District Metric 2: Engagement, Safety, and Environment Sections of the Views of Climate and Learning (VOCAL) Survey and Youth Risk Behavior Survey

**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.*

* At the school level, where appropriate and necessary, staff will implement home visiting programs to increase dialogue between school and families.
* Each school holds open house and back to school night events for all families.
* Weekly school and district newsletters sent to all families.
* Weekly office hours during different times of day at different school sites with the Superintendent of Schools.
* District leaders attend monthly SEPAC meetings.
* School and district leaders hold meetings with METCO parents in Boston at least twice a year.
* Beginning in SY2021, district leaders will meet with the PTO Presidents quarterly.
* During SY2020 and 2021, schools and district will engage families in the portrait of graduate work where a vision of the skills and dispositions that we want our students to have when they leave high school will be generated.

**Certifications**

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

* Hold at least one community listening session during March
* Send out an online survey to gather feedback
* Present information at SEPAC meeting for feedback
* Have School Committee hold a public comment section at one of the meetings
* Have school leaders get feedback at a staff meeting

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

Date of Approval: 12/17/2020