Student Opportunity Act Plan

Rockport

# 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 3-year strategic plan, Rockport Public Schools (RPS) is committed to ensuring that all of our students achieve success in our schools and after graduation. However, we recognize that not all student subgroups have experienced the same level of success to date. Based on a recent review of our district assessment data, we have determined that our economically disadvantaged students, high needs students and students with disabilities are not experiencing the same level of MCAS outcomes and graduation rates as their peers.

We are committing to intensive work to close the achievement and opportunity gaps for these student subgroups and fully recognize that this important work will take not just the efforts of district staff, but also our families and community.

Our three-year SOA Plan will be focused on the continuation and expansion of our Early Based Literacy Plan at Rockport Elementary School, our Integrated Pre-K Program at Rockport Elementary School and our Co-Teaching efforts and initiatives at all levels in all three of our schools.

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

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

Continuation of Implementation of Evidence Based Early Literacy Plan:

Rockport Elementary School is committed to meeting the literacy needs of all our students. However, when analyzing our MCAS ELA data, our students overall meeting and exceeding achievement needed a focus for growth.

Rockport Elementary School hired a literacy consultant to perform a needs-based assessment. We have determined that with a strong focus on early literacy and implementing consistent curriculum resources across grade levels, we will prepare our students and close the literacy achievement gap. This curriculum programming will be available to all RES students including students of color, English Learners and low-income families.

Using our Rockport Public Schools Strategic Plan, Rockport Elementary School recognized that we needed to develop a school literacy action plan to assure all elements of teaching literacy are taught with these research-based materials and supported with professional development and embedded coaching.

We will focus on these three goals during the duration of our SOA plan:

Goal 1: Students will be able to read and comprehend text proficiently within their grade level band, as measured by their performance on assessments (classroom, school and state) and in academic discussions.

Goal 2: Students will be able to meet grade level curriculum expectations by demonstrating proficiency of grade level reading expectations established by the Massachusetts and CCSS.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount: enter number, do not use the $ character** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **"Balanced Literacy Training" for teachers with Cynthia Merrill** | **9600** | **Professional Development** |

Goal 3: We will strengthen classroom instruction (Tier I) through PD, walk throughs and evaluations. Further strengthen the practices that support an effective intervention system (Tier II and II) and support a readers/writer's workshop model for students and support as many Tier III services in inclusive classrooms supporting our co-teaching initiatives.

## Focus Area 2: Expanded access to full-day, high-quality pre-kindergarten for 4-year-olds, including potential collaboration with other local providers (SOA categories D, F, and G)

Continued Expansion of our Integrated Pre-K Programming:

The Rockport Public School system is committed to meeting the early educational needs of the youngest students in our community. Using effective programming models and practices, the District has shifted practice over the past five (5) years to improve early learning opportunity for all potential community based peers as well as to assure the identification and individualized programming needs of students identified with special needs.

In 2015-16: The District had a single Integrated Pre-K classroom staffed with 1 teacher and 1 paraprofessional. There was a single community peer program option offered - 5 hours per day, 5 days a week. Students who were identified as eligible for special education were offered services as part of this same 25-hour model or in a related services only model.

In 2016-17: The District expanded its Pre-K program to include a second classroom, also staffed with 1 teacher and 1 paraprofessional. Both classrooms ran 5 hours per day, 5 days per week. There was no shift in special education programming.

In 2017-18: The District maintained its general education programming option and staffing remained level. However, in response to the need to individualize special education programming, there was initial and ongoing discussion relative to programming proposals. Specifically, a more informed approach to individualizing special education programming was put in place. Teams shifted to making proposals spanning from related services only, to a 2-day, 3-day or 5-day program.

In 2018-19: The District expanded its general education options in efforts to draw in participation from local families who might not otherwise be interested in a 5 hours per day, 5 days a week program. Specifically, the options available to community peers included 2-day, 3-day or 5-day program options. As a result, the enrollment numbers of community peers increased. During this same time, the Pre-K teachers were part of RES school-wide literacy training; the Curriculum Director worked to have the consultant spend time with the Pre-K teaching team, specifically to address early literacy. In anticipation of this opportunity, FY'19 262 Funds were allocated to support the purchase of a duplicate, developmentally appropriate titles to enhance the classroom-based library of each Pre-K classroom. Just prior to the mid-year, the staffing needs in one (1) of the classes increased to address the educational needs of a newly enrolling student. The need for classroom-based consultation around ABA methodologies, the development of consistent Task Analysis, direct training for parents and staff resulted in contractual services with a local BCBA. It should also be noted, that the Pre-K teaching and paraprofessional staff participate in both focused and periodic learning opportunities relative to SEL. As part of the work being done through the Essex County Learning Community (a competitive grant sponsored by the Tower Foundation), the CASEL text was purchased for all teachers across the district. In the process of writing curriculum, Pre-K teachers are mindful of incorporating SEL skills.

In 2019-20: The District currently supports two (2) Integrated Pre-K classrooms. Staffing across these classes includes two (2) full time teachers and three (3) paraprofessionals. Within the coming weeks, there is the anticipated addition of a part-time paraprofessional in response to meeting the educational needs of a new student reported to be moving into the District. Enrollment of community peers is near capacity as families continue to avail the array of programming options available.

Moving Forward: The commitment to supporting early literacy, SEL and ABA/data collection and use continue to be part of the overall program planning for the Pre-K program. Given the growing continuum of special education needs of our students there is a need for expanded PD opportunities. These elements of programming will be accounted for in the planning of the 2020-21 academic year.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount (enter number, do not use the $ character)** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **ABA and Data Collection training with Melanie Giles for Pre-K staff** | **2000** | **Professional Development** |

## Focus Area 3: Inclusion/co-teaching for students with disabilities and English learners (D and/or E)

Continued Expansion of Co-Teaching Initiatives:

Using the Rockport Public Schools Strategic Plan as a guide, the Rockport Public Schools had previously identified co- teaching as a priority for the district. The schools have taken the following action steps towards this goal over the past three years:

In 2017-18, the high school created structures to support a pilot initiative in the area of co-teaching with 14 teachers; prioritizing the content areas of math, ELA and science. The courses identified were primarily in grades 9 & 10 and focused on the MCAS-tested subjects throughout the pilot. Each class was taught by a content area certified teacher; along with a special educator. Professional development; along with a routine consultancy partnership with Kathy Porcaro of Salem State University was provided for all teachers for the first two years of implementation. Teachers continue to function in this model and professional development has been expanded to include extensive work in the philosophy of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and the CASEL competencies. The professional development in the area of UDL and SEL expands beyond the co-teaching partners to include the need for diverse and differentiated curriculum in every classroom, at every level.

The elementary school has fully implemented the co-teaching model and supporting professional development over the past two years with one co-taught classroom at each grade level (1st-5th). Additionally, in support of the co-taught classroom changes were made to student placement in order to provide broader support for both special education students and students receiving tier 2 academic interventions when feasible, with the balance of the roster populated with typical peers.

The middle school has begun to implement co-teaching in Grade 7 and Grade 8. In the 2018-2019 school year several special education teachers and content area teachers worked with Kathy Porcaro to consult and plan for co-teaching. In 2019- 2020 the schedules of special education teachers in Grade 7 and 8 were adjusted so that they could co-teach two math classes and two English classes. Co-teachers were sent in teams to several workshops this school year together in order to learn together and incorporate new strategies into their practice. This, alongside the school wide focus on UDL and SEL has created a strong foundation for co-teaching to grow from.

The goals of a district-wide implementation include the need to increase inclusive and diverse learning opportunities for all students, promote rigor, provide more hands-on learning opportunities and decrease unnecessary pull-out services that serve to separate and further alienate any one student population. We are committed to providing rich learning opportunities for the staff in order to foster and promote student engagement, increase student attendance, graduation rates, achievement and growth on MA standardized tests. Beyond the DESE data, we believe the practices we've introduced have served to provide a more meaningful learning environment that supports long-term growth and productivity for all students. The district will continue to allocate resources from the SOA to provide continuity, context and commitment to these important initiatives moving into 2020-2021 and beyond.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount (enter number, do not use the $ character)** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **Training in the areas of UDL, SEL, and inclusive practices for all staff** | **8500** | **Professional Development** |

**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: Annual dropout rate
* Additional Indicators: Chronic absenteeism (percentage of students missing 10 percent or more of their days in membership)

**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.*

Our plan to ensure that all families are engaged in our efforts will include the re-establishment of our school district SEPAC (Special Education Parents Advisory Council) during the 2020-2021 school year, the placement of ongoing emphasis for discussion on our areas of commitment at parent teacher conferences, School Council meetings, School Committee meetings, budget review workshops and the distribution of parental feedback surveys throughout the duration of our SOA plan.

**Certifications**

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

All three of our SOA plan component areas are based on the continuation and expansion of ongoing DESE approved evidence-based programs. Stakeholders have been engaged in all of the aspects of these programs through presentations delivered at school committee meetings, annual budget forums, yearly District Strategic Plan feedback surveys and School Council meetings. Financial support for these initiatives has also been enlisted through presentations at Finance Committee Meetings, Selectmen meetings and at our annual town budget meetings.

*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