Student Opportunity Act Plan

Springfield Empowerment Zone

# 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)
* Hispanic or Latinx students

*The rationale for selecting these student subgroups.*

The nearly 5,300 students – of whom 70% are Latinx, 19% are black/African-American, 81% are economically disadvantaged and 30% are first language not English – within the Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership ("SEZP") bring with them such unique gifts, extraordinary talents and incredible potential for transforming the city – Springfield – in which they live. On the whole, SEZP has realized many successes in the education of these students. However, when specific student subgroups are disaggregated – in particular, English Learners (15% of student population) and students with disabilities (25% of student population) – the data reveals the long road that SEZP still needs to travel in order to provide the programs, the supports, and the personnel needed for these students to thrive.

Funding from the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) presents SEZP with a profound opportunity to address these significant gaps through deliberate, research-based approaches. To that end, the below presents the academic performance – as well as essential indicators of school engagement/social-emotional well-being – for these two subgroups to help anchor the why undergirding the need for a transformative approach for working with ELs and students with disabilities, a transformative approach which SOA will fund.

English Learners

English Learners (EL) are significantly underperforming – in comparison to non-EL students - according to any number of academic and non-academic measures in SEZP. These results point to a critical need - within many existing SEZP schools - to develop models of support for these students that truly accelerate the learning of these students. With this population not insignificant, the call to action for bolder strategies could not be clearer.

From an academic standpoint, it is important to note where students stand across the board: one quarter of all EL students who tested in 2018-2019 were ACCESS Level 1, and 58% were Level 1 or 2, the two lowest levels of English proficiency. However, this masks the real problematic area: that there is not enough progress – year-to-year – with students in the Zone. For example, Zone-wide in 2018-19, only 17% of EL students made progress toward English attainment in 2018-2019 based on the ACCESS assessment. Moreover, only 4% attained English proficiency – the most important goal for ELs. On the most recent MCAS, only 1% of EL students in grades 6 to 8 meet or exceed standards in reading and only 3% meet or exceed standards in math. Going deeper into the data of a single school shows the depth of the challenge. Chestnut Academy - a school ranked in the 1% percentile of all schools, and one which will be reconfigured as described later in this narrative to become a dual-language school – saw the following challenges: in 2018-2019, only 8.5% of English learners at Chestnut Academy made progress toward English attainment. In school year 2019-20, our in-year measurement of academic progress for students – a comparison of the RIT scores on the fall and the winter NWEA MAP testing – demonstrates again that our current strategies to grapple with this challenge need to be greatly developed: The significant RIT score gaps between EL and non-EL middle school students remained unchanged from fall to winter, with a gap of 20 points in reading and a gap of 19 points in math.

Unfortunately - but not altogether surprising - the challenges for EL students are not limited to those captured in the above academic measures. By nearly every other non-academic accountability measure, there remains a significant gap between EL students and non-EL students, pointing to an inability of our schools to materially engage these students and nurture the incredible potential of bilingualism in these students. For example, zone-wide, our most recent chronic absentee rates (2019- 20) make a similarly powerful case for change: 36% of EL students were chronically absent compared to 28% of non-EL students.

Lastly, simply looking at graduation rates, dropout rates and college matriculation rates- measures that are undergirded by both academic and non-academic concerns – SEZP again recognizes the lengths that it must go to rethink the ways in which we teach and support ELs. According to the latest data (2018-19), the High School of Commerce - the largest high school within SEZP -serves 27% ELs, a marked difference from the 16% average total of emerging bilinguals at all other Springfield K-12 schools. The four-year graduation rate for EL students is 48.5% (as compared to 61.8% for non-EL students), and the drop-out rate for EL students is 7.7% (as compared to 4.6% for non-EL students). Overall, the overall proportion of post- graduate higher education matriculation is only 15% for four-year colleges and 20% for two-year institutions, numbers which are even lower for EL students. Among former EL students in the 2018 graduation cohort at Commerce, only 24% were enrolled in college within 16 months after graduation (9% in four-year colleges, 15% in two-year colleges).

Students with Disabilities

In a similar manner, a disaggregation of the accountability data reflects the need for restructuring, if not altogether vision- resetting, for programming and supports for students with disabilities. In looking at MCAS – ELA and Math – the cause for systemic change is clear. The following two tables - 1) Math and ELA MCAS proficiency and 2) Math and ELA MCAS growth rates – makes plain this point by comparing performance of SEZP middle schools against both the state averages and a similarly situated community (Worcester).

Table 1

Proficiency Performance of Students with Disabilities on the 2019-20 MCAS (% Meets/Exceeds)

ELA Proficiency

Grade Special Education Students All Students SEZP State Worcester SEZP State Worcester

6 2% 15% 10% 26% 53% 45%

7 1% 12% 5% 19% 48% 31%

8 0% 14% 4% 22% 52% 35%

All 1% 14% 6% 22% 51% 37%

Math Proficiency

Grade Special Education Students All Students SEZP State Worcester SEZP State Worcester

6 5% 15% 10% 26% 52% 43%

7 1% 13% 4% 19% 48% 24%

8 1% 11% 2% 19% 46% 23%

All 3% 13% 5% 22% 49% 30%

Perhaps most jarring in the above is that only 1% of special education students met or exceeded standards in ELA (across grades 6-8) and only 3% met or exceeded standards in math (again, across grades 6-8), whereas statewide 14% of special education middle school students met or exceeded standards in ELA and 13% met or exceeded standards in math.

Table 2

Growth of Students with Disabilities on the 2019-20 MCAS

ELA Growth

Grade Special Education Students All Students SEZP State Worcester SEZP State Worcester

6 26.7 44.0 50.7 38.4 50.0 57.2

7 32.4 45.2 39.7 40.0 49.9 44.2

8 33.1 45.9 41.4 38.3 49.9 49.6

All 30.5 45.0 43.8 38.9 49.9 50.4

Math Growth

Grade Special Education Students All Students SEZP State Worcester SEZP State Worcester

6 31.4 44.5 55.0 40.5 50.0 60.6

7 33.2 47.9 39.0 40.5 50.1 39.9

8 32.8 45.0 38.8 44.2 49.9 44.4

All 32.4 45.8 44.1 41.7 50.0 48.4

While the above table looks at the aggregate (Zone-wide), when viewed at the school-level, the challenges are even more severe: only two of the nine middle schools in SEZP had SGP of at least 40 in both math and ELA, on the 2018-19 MCAS. Drawing again upon our in-year measurement of academic progress for students – a comparison of the RIT scores on the fall and the winter NWEA MAP testing – points toward the persistent gap in academic outcomes: For a student with a disability (not identified as low incidence) as compared to a non-SPED students, the difference in the RIT scaled score in ELA is at least 16 points in 6th, 7th and 8th grades, and the difference in the RIT scared score in Math is at least 19 points in 6th, 7th and 8th grades.

Likewise, the non-academic measures of progress for students with disabilities also speak to radical new approaches in our work with this subgroup. In line with data for recent years, the chronic absenteeism rate for the current school year reveals that students with disabilities (not identified as low incidence) is 35.6%, as compared to the non-SPED population which has 23.6% chronic absenteeism rate. Likewise, as indicated in the table below, students with disabilities are suspended with greater frequency than non-SPED students, in nearly all the grades that the Zone serves.

Among students with disabilities in the 2018 graduation cohort at the High School of Commerce, only 13% were enrolled in college within 16 months after graduation (2% in four-year colleges, 11% in two-year colleges). Not surprisingly, this college matriculation rate relates back to the graduation rates for students with disabilities at Commerce. The table below compares the state averages as well as a similarly situated high school (North High School in Worcester), showing the degree by which a new and different approach is necessary.

Table 4:

Comparison of Graduation Rates for Students with Disabilities

Year Special Education Students General Education Students Commerce State Worcester

(North High School) Commerce State Worcester (North High School)

2017 35 73 74 61 88 84

2018 48 72 84 67 88 84

2019 39 74 74 62 88 80

In summary, the above student outcomes – for both EL students and students with disabilities – highlights the need for SEZP to prioritize significant changes to the programming, the underlying systems of support and the leadership to ensure that the promise of the Zone is felt by all students. The persistent gaps in performance between EL students and non-EL students, and between students with disabilities require dramatic and substantial changes to our current programming, and the Student Opportunity Act will help provide the support to make these changes over time.

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

As described above, the opportunity and outcome gaps that exist within two subsets of our student population – English Learners (ELs) and students with disabilities (SWD) – as compared to our general education (non-EL, non-SWD) are devastating, and therefore, in want of bold solutions. The Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership (SEZP) with funding from the Student Opportunity Act stands to receive an infusion of funding (a minimum of ~$1.9 million) in school year 2020-21 (or Year 1) to put toward evidence-based programs. Based on internal projections, SEZP anticipates that incremental Chapter 70 funds for evidence-based programs in Years 2 and 3 will be in the range of an additional ~$2.0 million to ~$5.0 million each year.

With this additional funding, SEZP intends to launch – and continue to deepen support – three initiatives

1. Launch a new school/a new program/new supports that employ inclusion/co-teaching for students with disabilities and English learners, with the founding of Lyceum Academy and Emergence Academy
2. Expand Early College pathways programs at the High School of Commerce to focus primarily on students under- represented in higher education, including tiered level of supports for both ELs and Students with Disabilities; and
3. Deepen efforts to diversify the educator workforce through recruitment and retention, particularly through a partnership with Teach Western Mass.

In addition to the narrative below, the accompanying budget file provides a detailed FY21 budget for these programs totaling $4 million, which is over ~$2.5 million above the recommended minimum.

## Focus Area 1: Inclusion/co-teaching for students with disabilities and English learners (D and/or E)

Students impacted:

* Through a new school - Lyceum Academy - over ~430 students (of which ~120 are English Learners at ACCCESS Level 1 or Level 2, and ~75 are students with disability) will be served in year 1. In each of Years 2 and 3, SEZP expects for the school to serve ~500 students (of which ~150 are English Learners at ACCCESS Level 1 or Level 2, and ~110 are students with disability) will be served.
* Through a second new school new program – Emergence Academy - ~28 students who are identified as SLIFE will be served in Year 1. The enrollment is likely to be stable in Years 2 and 3.

The data painfully makes clear that our current approach to developing the potential of EL students and students with disabilities is lacking, and as a result, we are launching three new initiatives in school year 2020-21. First, starting next year, SEZP plans to launch a dual-language model – Lyceum Academy - specifically designed to address the needs of EL students who otherwise would be attending 1) Chestnut Academy (a school in which 22% of the student body is English Learners) and 2) Impact Prep (a school in which 26% of the student body is English Learners).

This new model would be led by SEZP Principal-in Residence Robert Acosta, who has spent the last year planning and designing a middle school for SEZP with BES with a singular goal in mind: to develop our emerging bilingual students in an inclusive setting, grounded in evidence-based models. Mr. Acosta's instructional vision, his depth of experience in turnaround, his proven track record in developing bilingual students (both EL and non-EL), and his powerful life story as an EL student from Puerto Rico gives us confidence that the Zone has the leadership necessary for this uniquely tailored school model. The timeline and build-out plan for the dual language model would likely be as follows:

Year 1 - 2020-21: The dual-language model will serve students in grades 6 and 7. This includes all students who otherwise would have attended Chestnut Academy in grades 6 and 7, and - space permitting – some students who would have attended Impact Prep in grade 6 and 7. Chestnut Academy will serve students in grade 8.

Year 2 - 2021-22: The dual-language model will serve students in grades 6, 7 and 8. This includes all students who otherwise would have attended Chestnut Academy in grades 6 /7/8 and - space permitting – some students who would have attended Impact Prep in grade 6/7/8.

Lyceum is grounded in a multilingual approach to English Learners, accelerating second language acquisition and driving overall academic achievement for ELs by drawing upon the highest leverage, evidence-based model: the Dual Language Two Way Instructional model. The leveraging of the non-native English speakers native language(L1) allows for building on cognate connections and the transfer of knowledge via translations of content, concepts, and lessons while the course work in the English Language (L2) stimulates and improves the brain's executive function due to the constant code switching that occurs when working with two different languages. As a result, over time, these strategies enable the students not only to become fully bilingual, but also allows them to surpass the academic achievement of monolingual students.

Lyceum intends to hire bilingual teachers for ELA, math, and science and will schedule students into rotations that will allow them to receive instruction in both their L1 and their L2 within in a 50/50 model with reading and math in both English and Spanish and social studies and science in either language. Although the Dual Language Two Way Instructional model is designed to support Emerging Bilingual students who are in the process of learning English and who are designated as WIDA levels 1-3 , students designated as Expanding, Bridging, and Reaching (levels 4-6) who seek becoming fully bilingual will also be eligible to opt in to the program. The Dual Language Two Way model, as part of our multilingual program, will also be available to all students regardless of their L1 status as long as the number of students opting in do not surpass 50% of a cohort's composition. This is important in order to maintain a model that supports bilingual pairs work, an integral part of the model.

Meanwhile, and as part of the multilingual program, small group and individual pull outs may be programmed for WIDA levels 1,2 and 3 Emerging Bilingual students to develop foundational reading skills via the Reading Mastery, Corrective Reading, and/or the Español to English series during non-core content times. Furthermore, during grade level ELA class, small group and bilingual support will also be available. We know that Dual Language Two Way is one of many bilingual approaches.

While this is our primary model, we will also utilize ESOL Sheltered Instruction and Bilingual push-in and pull out models as part of our multilingual approach. For blended learning and independent student practice, we have selected Lexia Learning, a personalized instructional program with adaptive assessments that focuses on speaking, reading, spelling and writing and has been proven to accelerate second language acquisition. In math our core curriculum, Open Up, includes blended learning resources in English and Spanish, and we will utilize Khan Academy in both English and Spanish. Our goal is to remove as many barriers as possible for students to practice and apply skills as they acquire English and to allow families to support students with independent practice at home.

All students will also benefit from the extended time of the double block reading and math classes as well as the available after school and Saturday Academy tutoring as well. Saturday Academy will be held throughout the school year and it will provide students with the opportunity to receive up to three hours of small group support in ELA, math or both. During this time, students will be supported to achieve standards-based mastery of content and to develop the necessary skills to independently access grade level content.

Second, SEZP will launch Emergence Academy in the 2020-21 school year, to work with one of the more complex EL subgroups: the approximately 25 middle school students who will be identified as SLIFE (or Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education). Springfield Public Schools already offers SLIFE-specific programming at the elementary and high school levels. Amanda Gauthier - current Assistant Principal and founding team member at Rise – will serve as the inaugural leader of the program, which is likely to be located on the Van Sickle Academy/Rise campus. Additionally, the Zone will ask Ms. Gauthier – with core support from both the SEZP team and outside school design consultants – to explore a more expanded school model for students who have been in the United States for a short period of time and who are just beginning their English language development; this school – with the goal to launch in 2021-22 – may serve both SLIFE and non-SLIFE students – if there is a cohesive instructional and cultural backing for such a school, but the planning for the more expanded school is in its infancy. The timeline and build-out plan for this program will be as follows:

Year 1 - 2020-21: SEZP will launch a SLIFE-specific program. Additionally, SEZP will explore the plan/design of a larger academy (which would include, but not be limited to, SLIFE).

Year 2 - 2021-22: SEZP may launch a large academy (which would include, but not be limited to, SLIFE), with continuation into – if launched – Year 3 (2022-23).

The research supports the need for intensive supports for SLIFE students as they face – as the research indicates - a "triple challenge" which includes "developing English language proficiency, mastering grade-level subject matter, and developing and/or improving literacy skills." The creation of a special program next year to support these students – which has the fluidity both to immerse these students in the instruction necessary to address the "triple challenges" and to offer a large school/inclusive experience when appropriate – will help this vulnerable student population. The SLIFE program that we are designing for next year has those components: nested within Rise Academy at Van Sickle Middle School, the SLIFE program will have a small team of teachers who are steeped in practices that have been identified as accelerating English language proficiency, mastering grade level subject matter and developing literacy skills. While still in the planning and design stage, the founding leadership of our new SLIFE program has studied the works of ENLACE at Lawrence High School. ENLACE has achieved profound outcomes for students because of an unrelenting mission "to provide newcomer students with the academic and linguistic foundation and socio-emotional supports that will allow them to transition successfully and quickly into the mainstream high school environment." Moreover, founding leadership is also exploring the evidence-based Mutually Adaptive Learning Platform (MALP) as the core strategy for instructional practices. MALP grounds all lessons in six important foci: 1) develop and maintain interconnectedness, 2) immediate relevance to students, 3) scaffolding of written word through oral interaction, 4) balance of group responsibility and individual accountability, 5) introduction of new academic tasks, and 6) accessibility of new tasks. With this new program, SLIFE students will have the opportunity to be in an environment where they can and will be successful, an environment which does not currently exist in SEZP.

## Focus Area 2: Early College programs focused primarily on students under-represented in higher education (I)

Evidence-based program #2: Expand Early College pathways programs at the High School of Commerce to focus primarily on students under-represented in higher education, including tiered level of supports for both ELs and Students with Disabilities

When academic year 2020-21 commences, the High School of Commerce will have entered the most critical phase in its redesign process: the completed transformation to a fully-fledged gateway to an early college and career opportunity, aligned to three distinct industry-related pathways. The vision of the redesign effort - the implementation of "Pathways" at the High School of Commerce – will be made incarnate in school year 2020-21, with the offering of unprecedented, fully cohesive college and career runways for students. Put another way, we will be realizing the promise of this major school redesign: to make manifest living wages for graduates of Commerce in the regional industry pathways of Health and Human Services, IT, and Advanced Manufacturing. Our deliberate work in laying the groundwork for this exciting next stage of the redesign process simply stands to dramatically improve the life trajectories of our students because of the SOA support, and there is a reason for hope: in the 2019-20 school year alone, 158 students (22% of whom are emerging bilinguals) will have successfully completed college courses through one or more of our university partners.

Funding from the Student Opportunity Act– alongside the other resources that SEZP is putting into early college at Commerce - will provide the capacity, the training, and the materials/resources to ensure that our students pursue highly structured college or career paths as a continuous thread, beginning in grade nine and stretching beyond graduation. While this work is spearheaded by the leadership of the High School of Commerce, having strong and codified partnerships – with Springfield Technical Community College (STCC), Worcester State University, Westfield State University, Propel America, Project Lead the Way (PLTW), and the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) – ensures that there is connective tissue to spring forward our students in ways that Commerce traditionally has not.

The arc of a Commerce students – and therefore, the Pathways graduate at graduation – has been refined since our school design plan from a few years ago, the product of better understanding 1) our students' individual needs, 2) the partnerships in the community/region most apt to launch our students to a lifetime of success, and 3) the unique gifts and talents of the Commerce team. We now have come to think of the arc of the Pathways at Commerce student in eight stages (with two major parts), as described in the following two tables.

Table 5

The Arc of a Pathways Students at Commerce:

By Description of the Eight Stages

Part I: Explore, Develop, Choose, and Cultivate

Stage 1: Pre-Pathway Exploration and Selection

Students in grade nine will examine the skills, knowledge, and passions needed to pursue successful careers across each of the three industries, engaging in small-scale project-based learning (PBL) investigations through which they will envision themselves as members of each industry community. Their PBL experiences, in addition to hands-on content creation, will allow them to engage with practitioners in the field, recognize the routes to credentialing and qualification, visit higher education and industry institutions in which future learning might take place, and inventory their skills and interests relative to each pathway. Finally, students will use their PBL explorations to tentatively select their pathway of interest of the three broad industries of Health and Human Services, IT, and Advanced Manufacturing.

Stage 2: Deeper Learning and Essential Skill Development

Students in grade ten will engage in deeper learning about the explicit content and skills associated with their selected industry pathway. They will participate in semester-long courses that provide a deep-dive into the fundamental skills industry practitioners rely on during the progression of their careers. For example, students in the Health and Human Services Pathway may enroll in Principles of Biomedical Science, a course in which they explore concepts of biology and medicine as they dissect a sheep heart to determine potential factors leading to the death of a fictional "patient." These experiences will help students decide whether to move deeper into the Health and Human Services pathway courses or pivot to another pathway.

Stage 3: Cultivate and Refine Competencies and Passions

Students in grades 10-12 will continually enhance aptitudes and interests as they specific their pathways learning in increasingly explicit industry-related courses. In systematic Project Lead the Way (PLTW) and Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) courses, including Principles of Engineering, Medical Interventions, Cyber Security, Web Design, Environmental Sustainability, Integrated Production Technology, and others, students will further examine discreet itineraries in their chosen pathway, and connect these specializations to deepening selections in their Part II experiences at their college and/or internship sites.

Part II: Specialize and Apply

Stage 4: Early College on the Commerce Campus

Students can earn up to 12 college credits in grades 11 and 12, taking Worcester State University (WSU) courses on the Commerce campus to build the critical analysis, collaboration competencies, and fundamental knowledge they will need to further specialize their pathway learning. Courses will be offered in bilingual delivery sections and English delivery sections, and will include offerings such as Public Speaking, Introduction to the Puerto Rican Experience in Massachusetts, Business, Latinx Sociology in the United States, Introduction to Criminal Justice, and Community Leadership for Social Change, among others.

Stage 5: Early College on Both Commerce and University Campuses

Students can earn up to 12 college credits in grades 11 and 12, taking Westfield State University courses to deeply develop generalized pathway industry skills, collaboration competencies, and knowledge, first at the Commerce campus in their junior year and then on the Westfield State campus in their senior year.

Stage 6: Early College on a University Campus

Students can earn up to 20 college credits in grades 11 and 12, taking courses on the Springfield Technical Community College (STCC) campus, to build highly specialized pathway industry skills, collaboration competencies, and knowledge, selecting from six degree and certificate programs in IT and Cyber Security, Social Work, Business Administration, Digital & Graphic Multimedia Design, Health Science, and Criminal Justice. Students will apply both their credits and their knowledge to further an Associate's or Bachelor's degree or use their credentials to go directly into a related career field.

Stage 7: Applied Workforce Training and Career Development on the STCC Campus

In grade 12, students can engage in building highly specialized industry skills, collaboration competencies, and knowledge by selecting one of three workforce training pathways in Electrical Assembly, Water Treatment and Distribution, or Asphalt Inspection and Preparation, or earn stackable credentials in one of three applied career pathways as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), Sterile Processing Technician (e.g., Phlebotomist Technician), or HVAC and Energy Systems Technician.

Stage 8: Pre-Internship and Internship Development on Our Campus and Industry Sites

In grade 12, students can complete preparatory coursework to build highly specialized pathway industry skills, collaboration competencies, and knowledge in their senior year to prepare for an intensive paid post-graduate internship at an industry site immediately upon graduation in Photonics (e.g., Laser Technician), IT, or Health and Human Services.

Table 6

The Arc of a Pathways Students at Commerce:

By Grade-Level Progression

9 10 11 12

EXPLORE DEVELOP

SPECIALIZE

APPLY

IT Pathway

Pre-Pathways Exploration and Selection

* Project-based learning explorations across all three industry areas
* Selection of pathway interest

Deeper Learning and Essential Skill Development

* PLTW Computer Science Essentials
* PLTW Cyber Security  Cultivate and Refine Competencies and Passions
* PLTW Computer Science Principles (Python)

Specialize and Apply

* IT @ STCC
* Business Admin. @ STCC

Cultivate and Refine Competencies and Passions

* PLTW Computer Science A (Web design)

Specialize and Apply

* IT @ STCC
* Business Admin. @ STCC
* Applied Careers @ STCC

Advanced Manufacturing Pathway

Pre-Pathways Exploration and Selection

* Project-based learning explorations across all three industry areas
* Selection of pathway interest

Deeper Learning and Essential Skill Development

* Integrated Production Technology (SREB)
* Intro to Advanced Manufacturing (SREB)
* PLTW Intro to Engineering
* Cultivate and Refine Competencies and Passions
* Integrated Production Technology II (SREB)
* PLTW Principles of Engineering

Specialize and Apply

Multimedia Design @ STCC -Cultivate and Refine Competencies and Passions

* PLTW Computer Integrated Manufacturing
* PLTW Digital Electronics
* PLTW Environmental Sustainability

Specialize and Apply

* Applied Careers @ STCC
* Propel (Adv. Man)

Healthcare and Human Services Pathway

Pre-Pathways Exploration and Selection

* Project-based learning explorations across all three industry areas
* Selection of pathway interest - Deeper Learning and Essential Skill Development
* PLTW Principles of Biomedical Science
* Health Informatics (SREB)

Cultivate and Refine Competencies and Passions

* PLTW Human Body Systems
* Health Informatics II (SREB)

Specialize and Apply

* Criminal Justice @ STCC
* Health Sciences @ STCC  Cultivate and Refine Competencies and Passions
* PLTW Medical Interventions

Specialize and Apply

* Health Sciences @ STCC
* Criminal Justice @ STCC
* Applied Careers @ STCC
* Propel (Healthcare)

Specifically, the SY21 provision of funds will enable the High School of Commerce to establish Part I: Explore, Develop, Choose, and Cultivate, the final, most critical piece of the Pathways puzzle. This final development phase includes three distinct aspects:

1. Recruit, prepare, retain, and support all students, particularly those with complex learning needs, for a life-changing journey to college and/or career immediately upon graduation
2. Establish a robust infrastructure of course offerings for Part I (Explore, Develop, Choose, and Cultivate), including a systematic progression of courses and personalized college/career plans to knit academic rigor in literacy, mathematics, science, and social science with industry-focused rigor that will yield long-range choices within living-wage opportunities
3. Ensure students can distinguish between discreet career opportunities specific to the region, and fully understand the ladder of college and/or career development to attain these stackable employment prospects As a result, the Pathways experience for a Commerce student will look like the following:

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

Evidence-based program #3: Support Teacher Diversification Efforts through a Deepening Partnership with Teach Western Mass

The core partners behind SEZP – DESE, the Springfield Public Schools and the Springfield Education Association – envisioned that the autonomous conditions in SEZP could help usher in innovative and substantive solutions to the challenges that these school face, particularly the most persistent and perennial challenges impacting these schools. As SEZP leadership honestly and urgently assesses our performance to date, we understand more poignantly what research has identified as the single-biggest driver of student success and, for SEZP, our single-greatest challenge: the quality of the classroom teacher. Our desire to radically address this challenge helped lead to a promising partnership with Teach Western Mass. Teach Western Mass – through a renewed focus on the TWM Residency program and recruitment support – has provided promising support to taking on this challenge. Through this partnership, SEZP has increased our capacity to recruit and develop high-quality candidates to SEZP schools.

An important corollary to the impact of a quality teacher on student outcomes is the impact of a racially diverse teaching staff on student outcomes. The research is clear how a diverse teaching staff helps drive student achievement, improves student empathy, provides models for aspiration, and promotes social cohesion and tolerance. The Council of Chief State Officers articulated this point succinctly in their report last year:

Students benefit from mirrors and windows; the mirror representing the story that reflects their own culture and helps them build their own identity, and the window that offers them a view into someone else's experience…Research demonstrates that teachers of color serve as role models, set high expectations, and support the academic growth of students of color. Students of color are also less likely to be disciplined or expelled by teachers of color, when they are typically disciplined at disproportionately higher rates; and they are more likely to be identified for gifted programs, when they are disproportionately under-identified today.

The past year has brought a renewed sense of commitment to and explicit focus on equity and anti-racism within and across our schools. Educators and leaders across our schools are beginning to engage in deep conversation about the systemic oppression marginalized groups face in society and in our schools. They are examining the privilege they carry and how they can put that privilege to work to lift others up. There is much work still to be done, but we can already see shifts in practice based on this focus. To this end, SEZP has articulated an important mission to drive this work:

Equity exists in our schools when all educators, students, and families, regardless of race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, and other identifiers, have unimpeded access to inclusive learning and working environments characterized by high quality instruction, rich systems of support, robust information, and differentiated opportunities that contribute to their personal growth and academic success. We are beginning to raise awareness of bias and systematically work to dismantle the policies and institutional practices that are inherently racist and inequitable.

Furthermore, a recent report authored by Davis Dixon and Ashley Griffin, from The Education Trust and TeachPlus, titled If You Listen, We Will Stay: Why Teachers of Color Leave and How to Disrupt Teacher Turnover identifies five key challenges that educators of color face in their schools alongside five solutions to this issue and four actions school and district leaders can take to address this retention issue. By specifically naming the challenges that educators of color face – and often push them out of the school or profession – school leaders and districts cannot ignore the situation or chalk experiences up to chance and bad hiring. While the solutions presented in the report are not simple to implement, school leaders can use the report as a template and starting point for creating a real and inclusive environment that allows their educators of color to not only succeed but thrive. In the spirit of equity, it is crucial to remake their schools into systems that work for educators of color, rather than forcing educators of color to remake themselves in the mold of a particular school.

SEZP will be engaging in more robust teacher diversification efforts this year through 1) recruitment and financial incentives in the form of relocation stipends and signing bonuses, (2) a continued expansion of the support to TWM through scholarships and summer funding, and (3) targeted support to educators hired on licensure hardship waivers.

1. Recruitment Activities and Incentive Disbursement

In their report, The Education Trust and TeachPlus specifically identify providing stipends and signing bonuses as a promising strategy for recruiting and retaining teachers of color. Another key suggestion is to ensure that priority is placed on hiring educators of color into schools together so that strong cohorts can develop to reduce isolation. In our schools with low percentages of educators of color, this strategy will be particularly important to ensure we create a successful environment for new educators of color to the Zone.

SEZP's theory of change is built around the idea that school improvement work cannot be "one size fits all," but that each school needs the flexibility to modify their programming, staffing and resource use to meet the needs of the students in front of them. This includes the use of relocation stipends and signing bonuses; school leaders will retain autonomy over who receives these types of payment and in what amount. SEZP will provide guidelines to school leaders and support them where necessary in their decision-making.

As noted above, a small subset of schools used their own limited funding to offer relocation stipends (2 cases) and signing bonuses (approximately 6 cases). Based on that small sample, we can see that schools were successful in recruiting more educators of color to work in their buildings. Providing broader financial assistance in this manner can only continue to bring in more educators of color.

1. Continued Expansion of the Support to TWM through Scholarships and Summer Funding

Research, including from the National Education Association (NEA) reports, increasingly highlights the importance of a teaching force that represents students' ethnic and linguistic cultures to improve academic achievement, specifically for students of color. Across SEZP, approximately 90% of students are students of color, while only 32.5% of staff identify as people of color. The TWM Residency program reduces barriers to entry for educators of color to the teaching profession and prepares all teachers to succeed in high-need urban classrooms in SEZP.

Over the two years of TWM's Residency program, the number of participants has expanded from 20 Residents (2018-19) to 30 (2019-20). Over these two years the percentage of teachers of color in the program has been 40%, on average. Last year, the TWM Residency 18 interested and accepted candidates decline their enrollment into the program based on financial constraints; 5 of those 18 were aspiring educators of color. Overall, the highest-reported reason that applicants of color who were interested in the TWM Residency Program said that they could not commit was because of financial obligations.

With assured stipend support during the summer practicum and tuition support during the school year, TWM could leverage these benefits recruit and attract even more candidates of color. We are confident that advertising these lowered financial barriers would increase the number of people of color applying to and enrolling in the TWMR program and in SEZP schools. Based on the success of this initiative in FY19 and the continued need, a portion of the funding received would be contracted to TWM in August 2020 to cover tuition and placement fees for 8 TWM Residents hired into SEZP schools. Accompanying this financial assistance would be a 4-year commitment to remain in an SEZP school.

Another portion of the funding would be earmarked for summer stipends for TWM Residents working in SEZP. In Summer 2019, TWM Residents receive a stipend of $2,000 during their training at the beginning of the residency program while teaching summer school and engaging in relevant coursework. This stipend poses another financial barrier to residents as it is a time of lost income before they start making a salary with an SEZP school. With SOA funding to cover the increased

$2,500 stipend of 20 residents, we could mitigate another financial barrier to bringing great residents of color to SEZP schools.

1. Support to Educators Hired on Licensure Hardship Waivers

As noted above, in school year 2019-2020, approximately 33% of SEZP educators identify as people of color, in contradistinction to the 90% of students who are people of color. When hiring for the 2019-2020 school year, SEZP and SPS came to an agreement that SEZP schools could expand the subject areas in which SPS would secure a licensure hardship waiver from DESE. School principals identified this need: as they recruited new staff and reviewed application materials, they found that the candidates who possessed the necessary mindset and skills to be successful and who would act as a "mirror" to more students were less likely to possess the required teaching license.

Removing this barrier allowed SEZP to make progress overall in our goal for a more diverse staff. Of the nearly 140 incoming and returning educators employed through a licensure hardship waiver, over 61% identify as people of color. Within this group of educators, approximately 45 are pursuing a moderate disabilities license and are currently teaching within a special education setting.

With an influx of unlicensed educators, there is much SEZP must do to support these educators. With SOA funding in particular, two initiatives take priority:

1. SEZP will provide, on average, 1 MTEL voucher to each educator employed on a licensure hardship waiver; and
2. SEZP will provide a stipend for up to 5 licensed Special Educators to provide additional assistance and supervision to educators pursuing a Moderate Disabilities license through the Structured Guidance and Supports process.

Commitment 4: Monitoring Success with Outcome Metrics and Targets

The outcome metrics and targets for each of three initiatives are the following:

Initiative

Outcome Metric

Target

1. Launch two new schools that employ inclusion/co-teaching for students with disabilities and English learners % of Lyceum Academy students – identified as EL – who attain sufficient progress on ACCESS testing

50%

% of Lyceum Academy students – identified as Students with Disabilities – who make sufficient growth on NWEA Math

40%

% of Lyceum Academy students – identified as Students with Disabilities – who make sufficient growth (SGP) on NWEA ELA

40%

% of Emergency Academy students – identified as SLIFE – who attain sufficient progress on ACCESS testing

50%

1. Expand Early College pathways programs at the High School of Commerce to focus primarily on students under- represented in higher education, including tiered level of supports for both ELs and Students with Disabilities

Engagement of students in "Life Skills" and "Vocational" programming engaged in Pathways Learning Labs specific to their career areas of interest by fall 2021

80%

% of juniors registered in a dual enrollment course by summer 2021 as a result of newly launched Pre-Pathways Exploration and Selection and Deeper Learning and Essential Skill Development implementation in grades 9-10

30%

% of juniors – identified as EL - registered in a dual enrollment course by summer 2021 as a result of newly launched Pre- Pathways Exploration and Selection and Deeper Learning and Essential Skill Development implementation in grades 9-10

20%

% of juniors – identified as Students with Disabilities - registered in a dual enrollment course by summer 2021 as a result of newly launched Pre-Pathways Exploration and Selection and Deeper Learning and Essential Skill Development implementation in grades 9-10

20%

1. Support Teacher Diversification Efforts through a Deepening Partnership with Teach Western Mass

% of teachers of color hired for SY20-21 – with relocation stipends and/or signing bonuses – retained for 21-22 75% # of Teach Western Mass residents of color who are recruited and hired into a SEZP school 8

% of educators of waiver who access MTEL vouchers and earn their license or be deemed eligible for an additional waiver. 75%

Commitment 4: Engaging All Families

The targeted strategies of the Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership (SEZP) to amplify family engagement – in particular for low-income students, English learners and Students with Disabilities – include the following:

* Primary Person – Primary Person is the cornerstone of a whole-school model to support social-emotional needs of students and families. A primary person is an identified adult who calls check-ins with students/families at least once per week, with staff redeployed to ensure small teacher-student ratio. This primary person data is tracked in PowerSchool, and schools are held accountable for their participation rates, particularly for students identified as Tier 3 (most in need of critical family supports for their academic learning and social-emotional learning). This data is visualized in Tableau for all principals, with leaders sharing strategies for how to increase primary person engagement with families. Additionally, the Primary Person gathers two critical pieces for remote learning in particular: 1) Student Access to Technology (weekly % surveyed, by primary person), and 2) Family Rating of On-Line Experience (monthly % surveyed, by primary person).
* PIQUE/FACES - FACES (Families Advancing Community Empowerment in Springfield) is a bilingual family/guardian institute, run jointly by SEZP and Worcester State's Latino Education Initiative's staff, that seeks to empower SEZP families to actively engage in their child's education and strengthen family-school collaboration in order to improve the academic success of students. FACES, itself, is rooted in (and a licensee of) California's successful PIQE (Parent Institute for Quality Education) Over the course of a nine-week family institute, FACES programming provides tangible adult learning around ways to drive:

1. Advocacy on behalf of their children
2. Persistence and attendance in school
3. Academic improvement
4. Healthy and constructive relationships with teachers and counselors
5. Post-secondary education and career success for their children

Additionally, once family members have graduated from a FACES cohort, SEZP coordinators recruit and hire those parents to lead future cohorts as paid facilitators. This cycle of family learning, partnership, and empowerment lives out our vision of anti- racism and equity even beyond our schools. With the successful graduation of multiple family cohorts, we are now expanding access to FACES at four more campuses in the 2020-21 school year, which will only to serve to strengthen the school-based parent councils found at every SEZP school.

**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
* Custom District Metric 1: % of Lyceum Academy students – identified as EL – who attain sufficient progress on ACCESS testing
* Custom District Metric 2: % of Lyceum Academy students – identified as Students with Disabilities – who make sufficient growth on NWEA Math
* Custom District Metric 3: % of Lyceum Academy students – identified as Students with Disabilities – who make sufficient growth (SGP) on NWEA ELA
* Custom District Metric 4: % of Emergency Academy students – identified as SLIFE – who attain sufficient progress on ACCESS testing
* Custom District Metric 5: Engagement of students in "Life Skills" and "Vocational" programming engaged in Pathways Learning Labs specific to their career areas of interest by fall 2021
* Custom District Metric 6: % of juniors registered in a dual enrollment course by summer 2021 as a result of newly launched Pre-Pathways Exploration and Selection and Deeper Learning and Essential Skill Development implementation in grades 9- 10

**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.*

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**Certifications**

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

I certify that the above strategies were informed by family engagement efforts, including feedback received in the School Quality Review (a 3-day, in-person review of – among other core elements – the practices/policies of family engagement at every SEZP school), and the TNTP Insight Survey (a nationally-normed assessment of family satisfaction/engagement). The former allowed SEZP to bring in an expert in family engagement to illuminate the strengths and the shortcomings of each school's family engagement strategy, including for targeted subgroups (families of EL and SWD) and to provide insight into what programmatic needs/recommendations surfaced from meetings with families as part of the School Quality Review. The latter provides an essential response to the question of how likely the family would be to recommend this school, a question which TNTP has determined to be the most important indicator of family satisfaction/engagement.

I also certify that the above initiatives were included for review in the school plans and budgets presented to and approved by the SEZP Board of Directors at the June 4, 2020 meeting of the SEZP Board of Directors.

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

Date of Approval: Pending