Student Opportunity Act Plan

Springfield

# 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
* African American/Black students
* Hispanic or Latinx students

*The rationale for selecting these student subgroups.*

As the third largest school district in the commonwealth, Springfield Public Schools (SPS) serves over 25,000 students, 83.7 percent of whom are members of one or more traditionally underserved student subgroups (i.e., economically disadvantaged, English learners, and students with disabilities). As of SY 2020, our student population is 67 percent Latinx, 19 percent black, 10 percent white, 2 percent Asian, and 2 percent multi-racial. Additionally, 18 percent of students are English learners, 24 percent are students with disabilities, and 78 percent are economically disadvantaged. Given the high portion of students with high needs and the unique set of challenges this presents, our district needs to employ a variety of strategies to meet the needs of students.

An analysis of district MCAS results over the past 3 years shows that while overall scores have remained steady, achievement gaps have widened between white and Asian students compared with black and Latinx students as well as between English learners and non-English learners. Higher gains in growth among, white, Asian, and non-English-learner students compared with peer subgroups have contributed to this increasing gap. On a more positive note, while the largest subgroup gap continues to be between students with and without disabilities, that gap has narrowed over the past 3 years in both ELA and Math for grades 3 through 8.

When examining achievement across grade levels, we see that performance gaps start early and persist through high school. Nearly twice the proportion of white or Asian Kindergarteners were on grade level according to i-Ready fall diagnostics in 2019 compared with their black and Latinx peers. Gaps were also significant between English learners and non-English learners, but less so between students with and without disabilities. Further analysis of MCAS results by grade level shows that gaps in growth are highest in 6th grade as students transition to middle school. In most cases this contributes to a widening of the achievement gap between subgroups that persists through 10th grade. The largest gaps in high school MCAS performance are between English learners and non-English learners, followed by students with and without disabilities. Gaps are also higher in ELA than in Math for both of these subgroups, while gaps between white or Asian students and black or Latinx students are higher in Math.

The area in which we have seen the greatest improvement in closing achievement gaps is in our graduation and dropout rates. Since 2012 our overall graduation rate has increased by 17.2 percentage points with the greatest gains evident among English learners (an increase of 31.0 points) and Latinx students (an increase of 21.6 points). Furthermore, the graduation rate for SPS English learners in 2019 exceeded the rate for English learners statewide. Over the same time period our dropout rate decreased by more than half, from 10.0% to 4.4%. Again, the greatest decreases were for English learners (7.8 points), Latinx students (6.5 points), and students with disabilities (6.6 points). We attribute these improvements to a number of initiatives including: the creation and expansion of alternative and flexible pathways to graduation; increased availability of online credit recovery courses; offering free night and summer school courses; the addition of graduation coaches; and providing necessary academic and social/emotional supports to students identified early on as at-risk for dropping out.

Finally, while there are many shared challenges among the 62 schools in our district, there is also considerable variation. One of our elementary schools has a churn mobility rate of 37.0%, while another is 3.4%. The difference between our highest and lowest economically disadvantaged schools is 61.8 percentage points. We also see variation in schools' success in improving performance across subjects and grade levels. Consequently, while all schools need to work to close gaps among subgroups, the strategies used to do this must also vary.

To summarize, our data analysis reveals the following regarding achievement gaps among student subgroups:

* Since the introduction of Next-Gen MCAS, in grades 3 through 8 gaps in MCAS performance have widened between subgroups, except for students with disabilities.
* Significant differences in academic achievement among student subgroups are evident as early as Kindergarten.
* Achievement and growth gaps continue through elementary school and widen upon entry into middle school for several subgroups.
* The variety of initiatives introduced and expanded upon over the past 7 years have worked to significantly narrow gaps in graduation and dropout rates among subgroups.
* Just as challenges vary from school to school, so must the strategies implemented to address them.

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

With the opportunity to invest additional resources in evidence-based programs to close achievement gaps and recognizing that our data analysis reveals that gaps vary between schools, the Springfield Public Schools is prioritizing distributing Student Opportunity Funding to schools, on a per pupil basis, and empowering school communities to make strategic investments to address the most pressing gaps in their building. Based on the available Year One incremental Chapter 70 funds, this plan allocates a minimum of $3.5 million to school-decided investments in targeting their most pressing achievement gaps and $991,181 to expanding full-day preschool opportunities. Based on internal projections, we anticipate that incremental Chapter 70 funds in Years Two and Three will be in the range of $3 and $6 million per year allocated to schools to implement or expand evidence-based programs targeting each schools' most challenging achievement 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)

Students impacted: Additional full day pre-kindergarten classrooms will serve approximately 300 students in Year 1 (SY21) and will expand to covert half day and additional seats.

As a district, we see expanding high quality pre-k and reconfiguring literacy instruction as two complementary strategies for improving student outcomes, particularly in ELA. We aim to increase access to an enrollment in new pre-K programs that will flow seamlessly into continued strong early literacy instruction in grades K-3.

In Year 1 (SY21) SPS will open 300 new full-day pre-kindergarten seat and begin implementation of early literacy programs. Our pre-kindergarten model will be structured based on the evidence-based model below.

1. All pre-K educators will hold a degree in early childhood education and will be prepared to support the needs of all incoming students.
2. We will further research and adopt high-quality curriculum materials that are aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and based on national models of early education.
3. We will establish an extensive progress monitoring and assessment system, ensuring student needs are being identified and addressed
4. Teachers will receive professional development throughout the year to enhance their practice, with expert coaches providing embedded support in the classroom.
5. We will ensure all classroom settings are appropriate for pre-K students and culturally responsive.

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

1. Adopting high-quality, evidence-based literacy curricular materials for all core content areas
2. Using valid assessments to identify instructional needs and to monitor progress.
3. Implementing evidence-based interventions to address individual student needs.
4. Providing initial and ongoing professional development and support to teachers, leaders, and support staff, through embedded instructional coaches and external PD providers.

We have been expanding pre-K in the SPS over the past few years. In addition to ensuring a successful opening of new pre- kindergarten seats, we will focus primarily on core instruction in pre-kindergarten and early elementary literacy. With support from instructional coaches, educators will implement the adopted instructional materials, participate in ongoing curriculum- specific professional development, and utilize screening assessments to inform instruction.

## Focus Area 2: Supporting educators to implement high-quality, aligned curriculum (E and F)

Students impacted: The schools that selected to purchase curriculum, professional development, and intervention materials will use those resources with their students in order to increase student achievement.

SPS has spent millions of dollars over the past few years to ensure that all students have access to standards based aligned curriculum and interventions.

In order to support students, educators, acceleration, remediation, and increase student achievement, schools will purchase

1. Curriculum materials will be standards based and aligned to the MA Sate Standards. These will be used as resources to enhance the core curriculum.
2. Professional Development will be purchased to support the curriculum implementation. This high-quality professional development will be centered around standards alignment, development of engaging units and lessons, along with providing support for the teaching and learning cycle.
3. MCAS Portfolios Completion Materials will be purchased to demonstrates students knowledge and mastery of standards.
4. Intervention materials will be purchased for students that are performing below grade level and need tier 2 intervention and support.

SPS recognizes that high quality standards-based curriculum is critical to ensuring successful outcomes for all students. We also understand the importance of high-quality professional development to ensure curriculum and interventions are implemented with fidelity.

## Focus Area 3: Increased personnel and services to support holistic student needs (C and/or D)

Students Impacted: Schools that have opted to increase school personnel and services to serve the holistic needs of students will utilize personnel and services in a manner that will benefit all students who attend their schools.

In order to support our student in closing achievement and opportunity gaps, the identified schools within the Springfield Public School District will increase personnel and services to support the holistic needs of students. These personnel and services will be in place for the beginning of the FY21 academic year and will focus on both remediation and acceleration strategies based on identified student outcomes. Increased school personal and services will include:

1. Additional classroom teachers (ELA; Math; Science) to reduce the class size to better serve needs of tier 2 and tier 3 students within the general education classroom.
2. Additional classroom paraprofessionals to assist educators to better serve the needs of tier 2 and tier 3 students within the general education classroom.
3. Academic Intervention Teachers for both ELA and Math
4. Additional Graduation Coach/School to Work Transition Teacher to support high school students in both completing requirements for graduation and to support students as they transition to co-op experiences.
5. Additional counselors to support the social emotional learning needs of students.
6. Additional ELA and Math tutors to support remediation and acceleration of students based on data analysis.
7. Additional Collaborative Professional Development Teachers and Instructional Leadership Specialists to support educators in implementing curriculum and instruction that is standards based, rigorous, and relevant instruction for all students.

The additional staff will enable schools to continue and deepen the implementation of curriculum and instruction across all grade levels and content areas in alignment with specific student needs as identified through data analysis. Additionally, support from instructional coaches and support staff, including counselors, paraprofessionals, and tutors, will build the capacity of educators to serve the holistic needs of all students.

## Focus Area 4: Inclusion/co-teaching for students with disabilities and English learners (D and/or E)

In a number of Springfield schools, as well as for the district as a whole, the largest achievement gaps are between students with and without disabilities and those students who are and are not English Learners. Rooted in the evidence on the benefits of an inclusion model, all Springfield Public Schools prioritize serving students in the least restrictive setting possible and giving them maximum exposure to and experience with grade-level content in classrooms with peers who are not English Learners or who do not have a disability.

Effectively implementing an inclusion classroom where students receive both grade level content and the supports and scaffolding necessary to be successful usually requires a co-teaching or a push-in staffing model with a licensed ESL or Special Education teacher working alongside the grade level or content area teacher. Inclusion classrooms can also provide added supports for all students through a paraprofessional. With that in mind, and to improve opportunities for inclusion and co-teaching of students with disabilities and English learners, several schools will be hiring an additional ESL teacher, Special Education teacher, or Special Education paraprofessional. In all schools making this investment, the new educator will be hired for the start of the 2020-2021 school year and will be serving as a co-teacher or support in an inclusion classroom.

## Focus Area 5: Community partnerships for in-school enrichment and wraparound services (C)

Springfield Public Schools has committed itself to creating school, family and community-based partnerships. Many schools in our district have decided to use these partnerships to support student learning. These partnerships are ones that can weave together a critical mass of resources and strategies that bridge the gap between schools, families and community. These connections are critical in impoverished communities where schools often are demonstrating the largest need for supports.

Any effort to connect home, school, and community resources must embrace a wide spectrum of stakeholders.

These comprehensive partnerships represent a promising direction for generating essential interventions to address barriers to learning, enhancing healthy physical and mental development, and strengthening schools, families and neighborhoods. Today, building such partnerships requires an ongoing commitment, enlightened vision, creative leadership, and new and multifaceted roles for professionals who work in schools, with families and in our communities.

These partnerships promote and address academic, social and emotional supports to the individual, to families and communities alike.

Intervention Services from School Based Services

School Based Services focuses on creating public-private partnerships, enabling cost-effective educational options within the public school districts for special needs students, at-risk students, alternative education programs and schools involved in changing their school culture. School Based Services staff work cooperatively with district personnel to create safe, civil learning environments that promote increased school attendance, increased academic performance, improved student behavioral controls and enhance positive parent and community communication and support.

Professional Development that addresses Social Emotional Learning

Professional development will support teachers with strategies on how to most effectively to support students that demonstrate needs in this area

Parent Workshops in ELA/Math

These workshops will develop parents with skills to support youth in the content areas of ELA and Math. Schools will share literacy and math activities and resources that can be used at home to supplement instruction outside of school hours. Parents will be informed of current curriculum and its components to support their youth. Workshops will also inform parents of academic community resources that can be used as supports to their children as well.

**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 Achievement: Science achievement as measured by average scaled scores (or CPI, depending on grade level) on MCAS
* Student Growth: ELA mean student growth percentile (SGP)
* Student Growth: Mathematics mean student growth percentile (SGP)
* High School Completion: Four-year cohort graduation rate
* High School Completion: Extended engagement rate (5-year cohort grad rate plus percentage of students who are still enrolled)
* High School Completion: Annual dropout rate
* English Language Proficiency: Progress made by students towards attaining English proficiency (percentage of students meeting annual targets calculated to attain English proficiency in six years).
* Additional Indicators: Chronic absenteeism (percentage of students missing 10 percent or more of their days in membership)
* Additional Indicators: Percentage of 11th and 12th graders completing at least one DESE-identified advanced coursework

**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.*

Springfield Public Schools recognizes that family engagement is critical to ensuring successful outcomes for all students. Given our focus on student subgroups, it is particularly important that we find ways to effectively engage the families of our students of color, our EL students, students from low-income backgrounds, and our students with disabilities.

We recognize that existing family engagement opportunities at our schools may not be effective in reaching all families. In addition to our current PTO and School Centered Decision Making Team meetings and home visit project in all Springfield Public Schools we are also committing to increase the number of student and family engagement activities with a specific focus on planning events that increase the engagement of families of students of color, English learners, students with disabilities, and those from low-income background. The improvement of family engagement will be measured through

**Certifications**

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

We engaged with all schools, PTO's, Student Centered Decision Making Teams, School Committee, Special Education and ELL parent groups, Principals, Teachers, and the Springfield Education Association.

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

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