Student Opportunity Act Plan

Taunton

# 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)
* African American/Black students
* Asian students
* Hispanic or Latinx students
* Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic/Non-Latinx students
* White students

*The rationale for selecting these student subgroups.*

The Taunton Public Schools (TPS), with its' diverse student population of 8,217, represents one of the many Gateway Districts within the Commonwealth. As a District and as a community, we are being confronted by a rapid shift in student demographics along racial, linguistic, and ethnic lines along with the increased enrollment of students whose families are economically disadvantaged.

In an effort to meet our mission to provide "Academic excellence for every student, in every classroom, in every school", the District is in the process of adopting the philosophy and frameworks of the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). District and building based leaders and staff have been actively engaged in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)-sponsored S3 and SEL Mental Health Academies. To further complement the work with MTSS, we have been applying, throughout the District, the lessons, and evidenced-based practices and protocols learned through our two-year collaboration with the Statewide System of Support (SSoS). Although this directed collaboration was initially established to occur with four of the District's schools, we have voluntarily replicated this work in the other seven school sites.

The Taunton Public Schools is constructing its Student Opportunity Plan to address the inequities which continue to exist within the District. The District's Opportunity Plan will outline the areas of need that have been identified through the Superintendent's entry work, surveys, and public forums with our educators, families, and the community-at-large. These identified focus areas align with the Commissioner's commitments of focusing on student subgroup achievement levels; utilizing evidenced-based programs to address achievement gaps; monitoring success with outcome-based metrics and targets and engaging all families.

A Taunton Public Schools student demographics at a glance:

* White—63%
* African American/Black—18%
* Hispanic/Latino—13%
* Multi-Race/Non-Hispanic—5%
* Asian—1%
* Students of High Needs—57%
* Students with Disabilities—20%
* Economically Disadvantaged—46%
* English Learners—6%
* English is Not 1st language—11%

Utilizing Edwin Analytics, the following reports were reviewed to identify the subgroups in need of focused support: PE304 MCAS District Results by Subgroup; PE404 MCAS School Results by Subgroup; GR201 MCAS Statewide Achievement and Growth by District; and GR302 MCAS District Growth Distribution.

In analyzing the past three years of data, we have identified the following subgroups that will receive targeted supports: Economically Disadvantaged, Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners (EL), African American/Black, Hispanic/Latino, High Needs, and Homeless/Foster Care students.

The disparities between our subgroups exist both within our District and also when we compare our students to the State achievement levels. Moreover, the achievement gaps amongst our student subgroups are identifiable as early as third grade and continue through high school.

Several trends in student performance were noted across grade levels. As stated previously, subgroup performance gaps begin in third grade, tend to slightly narrow by the time students reach fifth grade, and widen throughout the middle school years and into high school. Despite the District's Accountability Rating of "Not requiring assistance or intervention," we have not been able to consistently and systematically address the overall achievement gaps of our students, although we are successfully meeting some identified targets.

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

## Focus Area 1: Increased personnel and services to support holistic student needs (C and/or D)

The SEL CIT began in the fall of 2018. We have maintained a very committed group of participants including Teachers, Guidance Staff, Administrators, Community Members, and most recently, high school students. We followed the suggested Social Emotional Learning Implementation Plan set forth by many districts. Step one was to have District Level Administration and Buy in as a Committed Leadership Team. Step two was to create a vision. Our Vision, ''To Empower the School Community to implement a common approach to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment that creates responsible citizens who are socially and emotionally ready to learn."

The committee will continue to research and discuss the merit of the programs to be used. The goal of the committee will be to choose one or more of those piloted curriculums for approval in June. If approved, professional development will be offered over the summer with the expectation that implementation will begin in September of 2020. Goals included rolling out this process in a thoughtful and collaborative manner, choosing materials that involved the five competencies of Social Emotional Learning as well as being research based with proven validity. The group is committed to identifying a program that is sustainable and cost effective.

## Focus Area 2: Another evidence-based program proposed by the district—Hiring school personnel that best support improved student performance (D)

Reducing class sizes has been a standing budget priority for the Taunton School Committee for many years and has been an expenditure that the Taunton Public Schools has a dedicated and committed history of undertaking and needing. In FY18, the School Committee committed funds in its budget to support the hiring of five (5) teachers to reduce class sizes. In FY19, two

(2) teachers were hired to reduce class sizes in middle school wellness classes. And in FY20 two (2) high school math teachers were hired to reduce very large high school math class sizes. Ongoing throughout this time, and prior to this time there have been on average 6-8 "bubble" teaching staff hired to address unexpectedly large classrooms that arise in a particular building at all grade levels. Moreover, class size reduction was identified as one of the top 3 budget priorities for 73.35% of the community (over 700 participants) and 81.78% of the staff (over 450 participants) who participated in the 2020- 2021 Budget Priority Survey recently completed. This survey is guiding the School Committee's current budget decisions for FY21, as there is still a need at all grade levels to reduce class sizes further.

## Focus Area 3: Early College programs focused primarily on students under-represented in higher education (I)

Taunton High School's Innovation Pathway Programs are aligned with career opportunities in the healthcare and information technology industry sectors with high employer demand. These pathways will provide students the opportunity to make progress toward obtaining an industry-recognized credential, or college credits toward a Certificate, Associates, or Baccalaureate degree. The program is designed as a fully integrated pathway for students, including: Career and postsecondary education exploration, grounded in employability skills and labor market information; Program design reflects an integration of course taking, career exploration and work based learning aligned to the identified healthcare and information technology industry sectors; The pathways, starting at grade 9, are designed to prepare students for college level courses to be taken in grade 12, if not sooner, and students must complete MassCore by graduation; College and career exploration and course taking is linked with the broader college going experience, such that where feasible, students participate in activities on the campus of a postsecondary partner institution; The programs are designed so that at the conclusion of high school, students will have a clear understanding of the postsecondary pathways and courses of study available to them, and how those courses of study will help facilitate their career aspirations. At the conclusion of the pathways, students will also be fully familiar with, and prepared to pursue, their next steps in postsecondary education (application, admission, enrollment).

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

The District intends to expand full time pre-kindergarten programming with the ultimate goal of having full day pre- kindergarten classes in all elementary school buildings. Additionally, the District intends to reorganize and/or expand the existing half-day pre-kindergarten program offerings which are currently located within the Leddy Preschool.

Recommendations from the existing Pre-K Expansion Community Input Team will guide the expansion process of both full and half day programs. For the 2020-2021 school year expansion of the full day program at Mulcahey Elementary School is already slated to occur as an additional classroom will be added to that school for a total of three (3) full-day Pre-Kindergarten classrooms.

**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: Mathematics mean student growth percentile (SGP)
* High School Completion: Annual dropout rate
* Post-secondary Success: Enrolled in college during the first year after high school
* Post-secondary Success: Persisted in college into the second year Custom District Metric 1: DIBBLES
* Custom District Metric 2: MAP
* Custom District Metric 3: Summative Assessments
* Custom District Metric 4: Quarterly Failure Rates

**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.*

The Taunton Public Schools recognizes that family engagement is critical to ensuring successful outcomes for all students. Given our focus on student subgroups, we must 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. Therefore, in addition to our ongoing monthly special education parent advisory council meetings, monthly PTO meeting at each school, our annual Parent Resource Fair, and parent-staff home visit programming, we are also committing to expanding our family potluck dinners, cultural recognition and celebration nights, and strengthening our community partnerships with area housing developments and centers specifically targeted to families of students of color, EL students, students with disabilities, and those from low-income backgrounds. We will measure the engagement of families who receive these additional supports through a follow-up survey and by tracking the number of families who participate in these events each year.

**Certifications**

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

Date of vote: Wednesday, March 18, 2020 (Tentative)

Outcome of vote: Unanimous, 8-0 in favor.

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

Date of Approval: 03/18/2020