Student Opportunity Plans

Guidance materials and plan template for superintendents
for the creation of three-year, evidence-based plans
required by the Student Opportunity Act

LONG FORM

Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner

Winter 2020

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY
EDUCATION

Student Opportunity Plans

Letter from Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley

With the passage of the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) (Chapter 132 of the Acts of 2019), we have once again affirmed that public education is cherished in the Commonwealth. The law implements the recommendations of the 2015 Foundation Budget Review Commission and includes other provisions to benefit our public schools. It is now up to all of us in schools and districts to ensure we spend our resources in the way the SOA intends, so that all students have access to an excellent education.

The goals of the SOA closely track those in the report I issued to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education last summer, "Our Way Forward." In that report, I recognized the progress our state has made over the past decade in overall student achievement but noted that persistent opportunity and achievement gaps remain for our students of color, low-income students, English learners, and students with disabilities. **Closing these gaps is our collective work for the next decade, and the SOA will fuel our efforts to ensure all students achieve at high levels and are prepared for success after high school.**

It is critical that district resources support student subgroups as the legislation intended. As part of the SOA, districts are required to submit three-year, evidence-based plans aimed at closing persistent disparities in achievement among student subgroups. While the law sets forth several requirements for these plans, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will focus primarily on the extent to which districts are implementing evidence-based programs that will close these gaps in their communities.

The Department is charged with creating a template for these three-year plans and providing guidance to help districts complete them. As a former superintendent/receiver, I recognize that districts produce plans under various state and federal laws, and the SOA adds yet another planning requirement. **Over time, we intend to further consolidate and streamline requirements for these plans, so that the workload is more manageable**.

In recognition that over 80 percent of new Chapter 70 funds are going to approximately 35 districts, we will take a bifurcated approach to the SOA plan templates. There will be a "short form" for most districts and a "longer form" for those districts receiving substantial new funds. At the same time, it is critically important that **all districts use their SOA plans as an opportunity to ensure that strong programs are in place to support the needs of student subgroups**, as virtually all districts have achievement and opportunity gaps that limit our students' potential.

Two final points. First, I understand the timeline is extremely tight. In recognition of that, we are asking for short, succinct plan documents, even for districts using the long form. **Fundamentally, each district's plan should be a commitment to do a few things well; it should <u>not</u> be a comprehensive strategic plan.** Second, we are especially interested in accelerating the adoption of three programs statewide: 1) expanded pre-kindergarten and evidence-based early literacy, 2) Early College programs, and 3) diversifying the educator and administrator workforce. In our guidance, DESE is also providing a larger suite of evidence-based program examples for districts to consider when formulating their plans.

The SOA is truly a historic opportunity for Massachusetts to propel our state to become a national leader, not just in overall achievement, but for all children in the Commonwealth. Thank you for your efforts on behalf of our students, and I look forward to reviewing your plans in April.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Basic Overview of Template and Requirements

District Plan Template Focused on Four Commitments

The SOA requires each district to create a three-year, evidence-based plan for the Commissioner's review. The Department has established a **template for this plan which asks each district to make four "Student Opportunity Commitments"** in order to close opportunity and achievement gaps among student subgroups.

The four commitments are to:

1. **Intentionally focus on student subgroups** who are not achieving at the same high levels as their peers;
2. **Adopt, deepen or continue specific evidence-based programs to close opportunity and achievement gaps** for student subgroups and **allocate resources** to support these programs;
3. **Monitor success in reducing disparities in achievement among student subgroups** over three years with a small number of metrics and targets; and
4. **Engage families, particularly those families representing student subgroups** most in need of support, about how best to meet their students' needs.

Bifurcated Approach to Templates Based on Amount of Incremental Chapter 70 Funds

The Commissioner has determined that districts' requirements will be bifurcated based on the amount of incremental Chapter 70 funding a district is expected to receive (based on the FY21 proposal in the Governor's House 2 budget released on January 22, 2020).

1. Districts expected to receive **less than $1.5 million** in incremental Chapter 70 funds in FY21 will fill out a "short form" template.
2. Districts expected to receive **over $1.5 million** in incremental Chapter 70 funds in FY21 will fill out a "long form" template that will require additional information, particularly concerning their budgets.

Plan Submission
Student Opportunity Plans are due by 11:59 p.m. on April 1, 2020. We are providing this guidance document and a separate budget file *for planning purposes only*. **In March, we plan to send out an electronic link to a web form that districts will use to submit their plans.**

Further Requirements
Districts will receive information in summer or fall of 2020 about any further requirements and annual reporting associated with these plans.

Questions & Support
Please email SOAplans@doe.mass.edu with your questions, and we will provide answers and connect you with the right sources of support.

Suggestions for Successful Planning

- **Focus on evidence-based program selection**: In reviewing plans, our primary focus will be on which **evidence-based programs a district is selecting and the resources being allocated to those programs.** To support districts in identifying specific programs that will best support their student subgroups, DESE has compiled a menu of **evidence-based program examples** for districts on page 6 of this document. The commissioner and his leadership team selected these examples based both on evidence and experience seeing these programs move the needle for students.
    - **Districts that select from this menu, assuming their specific program generally matches the features of the example provided, can expect that their selection will satisfy the statutory requirement to include evidence-based programs in their plans.**
    - Districts may also identify their own evidence-based programs outside of the menu, so long as they align to one or more of first nine categories in the law (see categories A-I on the bottom of page 6). Finally, districts can propose programs outside of these categories but they will be subject to the commissioner's review.

- **Thoughtfully engage your community**: We will look for districts to confirm they engaged groups outlined in the statute alongside other local community groups, so that plans **reflect student needs as identified by the community** and so communities can in turn support districts in their implementation of evidence-based programs. Please consult the detailed guidance later in this document for stakeholder engagement requirements and recommendations.

- **Do a few things well**: We encourage districts to **commit to a small number of high-impact, evidence-based programs to close opportunity and achievement gaps among student subgroups**. A completed Student Opportunity Plan should **not** look and feel like a comprehensive strategic plan or spell out a laundry list of priorities and initiatives. If your district already has a strategic plan, the Student Opportunity Plan could be a chance to highlight the most critical initiatives underway and deepen them or add a few new programs that will best support student needs.
    - Long form districts are encouraged to focus primarily on how they will spend incremental Chapter 70 funds to adopt new evidence-based programs or deepen current efforts. However, long form districts not expecting to receive significant new funds can also focus their narratives more on current programs underway that are focused on improving outcomes among student subgroups.

- **Focus on implementation**: We are interested in **concise, thoughtful commitments that will be backed up by high-quality implementation**. The Department **strongly recommends that districts keep their plans to a similar length as the sample template in this guidance document**. Rather than filling out additional paperwork, DESE encourages districts to spend that time with their teams ensuring that new programs will be implemented well. The commissioner intends to focus future school visits and DESE monitoring on observing the evidence-based programs that districts described in their plans.

Student Opportunity Plans
Evidence-Based Program Examples Identified by DESE

The Department has identified 17 examples of high-quality programs that the commissioner encourages districts to consider when selecting evidence-based programs to support student subgroups. Robust implementation of these programs may touch on multiple program categories (A through I) outlined in the SOA[1]. The program examples below are organized into four domains that reflect the core work of districts. Each example is pre-aligned to the SOA program categories, which are noted in parentheses after each example.

The commissioner is encouraging the adoption of Priority Programs (in bold below) and will likely offer multiplier funds to districts with particularly strong plans in these areas. We hope to make funds available via competitive grants by realigning grants within DESE. Please note that to receive multiplier funds for a pre-K program, districts must also implement a research-based early literacy program.

Enhanced Core Instruction
1. **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)
2. **Research-based early literacy programs in pre-kindergarten and early elementary grades** (E, F, and G)
3. **Early College programs focused primarily on students under-represented in higher education** (I)
4. Supporting educators to implement high-quality, aligned curriculum (E and F)
5. Expanded access to career-technical education, including "After Dark" district-vocational partnerships and innovation pathways reflecting local labor market priorities (I)

Targeted Student Supports
6. Increased personnel and services to support holistic student needs (C and D)
7. Inclusion/co-teaching for students with disabilities and English learners (D and E)
8. Acceleration Academies and/or summer learning to support skill development and accelerate advanced learners (A and E)
9. Dropout prevention and recovery programs (I)

Talent Development
10. **Diversifying the educator/administrator workforce through recruitment and retention** (D and H)
11. Leadership pipeline development programs for schools (D and E)
12. Increased staffing to expand student access to arts, athletics, and enrichment, and strategic scheduling to enable common planning time for teachers (B and D)
13. Strategies to recruit and retain educators/administrators in hard-to-staff schools and positions (D)

Conditions for Student Success
14. Community partnerships for in-school enrichment and wraparound services (C)
15. Parent-teacher home visiting programs (E)
16. Labor-management partnerships to improve student performance (E)
17. Facilities improvements to create healthy and safe school environments (J)

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[1] A) Expanded learning time in the form of a longer school day or year; B) Increased opportunity for common planning time for teachers; C) Social services to support students' social-emotional and physical health; D) Hiring school personnel that best support improved student performance; E) Increased or improved professional development; F) Purchase of curriculum materials and equipment that are aligned with the statewide curriculum frameworks; G) Expanded early education and pre-kindergarten programming within the district in consultation or in partnership with community based organizations; H) Diversifying the educator and administrator workforce; I) Developing additional pathways to strengthen college and career readiness; J) Any other program determined to be evidence-based by the commissioner.

Student Opportunity Plans

Narrative Plan: Checklist for Completing the Long Form

Districts should review this checklist alongside the sample long form narrative plan on page 9. The sample will provide the best guidance on the length and depth DESE expects in district responses. In addition to the narrative plan requirements below, please see page 8 for additional budget requirements for long form districts.

Commitment 1: Focusing on Student Subgroups
- ☐ Provide an analysis of district data that identifies opportunity and achievement gaps for student subgroups, including students of color, low income students, English learners, and students with disabilities.
  - Data sources could include: DESE's accountability system, local measures of student performance, and the ability of all students to access district programs, wraparound services, and other opportunities.

Commitment 2: Using Evidence-Based Programs to Close Gaps
- ☐ Consider selecting from the evidence-based program examples identified by DESE (on page 6 of this document)
- ☐ Describe each program in detail, making sure to include:
  - The number of students that will be impacted by the program in FY21 and in the following two years.
  - Details of the program model in FY21 and expected evolution of the program over the next two years.
  - Which schools the program will impact (answer can be district-wide) in FY21 and over Years 2 and 3.
  - Which student subgroups the program will address.
- ☐ Districts will fill out a separate budget file where they will list detailed program expenditures for FY21. In this file, districts will also specify how their programs are aligned either to the DESE program examples (on page 6) or the program categories provided in the SOA (provided in the footnote on page 6).
  - However, if your program is not either one of the DESE program examples or aligned to SOA categories A-I, in your narrative, describe why none of those programs would support closing achievement gaps among student subgroups in your district and include the evidence supporting the selected program.

Commitment 3: Monitoring Success with Outcome Metrics and Targets
- ☐ Select at least three outcome metrics to include in your plan. These can include metrics from the list provided by DESE (see page 19 of this document) or custom district metrics.
- ☐ Where possible, align outcome metrics with the evidence-based programs described in Commitment 2.
- ☐ Each district must also identify targets for each metric. Targets will be added to plans in fall 2020. If you choose a DESE metric, we will take care of this second step, as we will set the targets for you. Districts choosing their own metrics will be required to update their plans with targets in the fall. At that time, DESE may also request more information about the custom metrics districts selected. For more information, see pages 18-19.

Commitment 4: Engaging All Families
- ☐ Describe your district's ongoing plan for engaging families, including targeted strategies for families of low-income students, English learners, and students with disabilities. See page 20 for suggestions.
- ☐ Explain how your district will measure increases in family engagement based on these efforts.

Certifications:
- ☐ Certify that you engaged stakeholders as specified by the law: "Each plan must be developed by the superintendent in consultation with the school committee and shall consider input and recommendations from parents/guardians and other relevant community stakeholders, including special education and English learner parent advisory councils, school improvement councils and educators in the district."
- ☐ Describe your district's stakeholder engagement process and provide a list of stakeholders that were engaged. See pages 20-21 for suggestions.
- ☐ School committees should vote on the plan, as it will have budgetary and policy implications. Confirm that school committee voted on the plan and provide the date of the vote and the outcome.

Budget Requirements for Long Form Districts

With 37 districts collectively receiving over 83 percent of the total incremental FY21 Chapter 70 funds, DESE is requesting additional detail about how "long form" districts will spend their incremental Chapter 70 funds on behalf of students.

Budget file required for long form districts

In addition to the narrative plan, long form districts must complete a **separate budget file** that provides further details about the evidence-based programs they have committed to adopting or expanding. This budget file will span Year 0 (FY20) and Year 1 (FY21). Year 0 is included so that DESE can understand a district's starting point for existing programs that will be expanded. The Department is providing a budget file template (***Long Form SOA Programs Budget File***) and a sample long form budget file aligned to the sample long form narrative plan in this document.

While districts will not submit detailed budgets for FY22 and FY23 at this time, please be sure to include a description in your narrative plan of how the implementation of selected programs is expected to unfold over Years 2 and 3 of the plan, considering high-level budget projections for the second and third years. All districts will be expected to make sustainable, multi-year commitments to their selected programs, which will be further detailed in annual budget submissions for Years 2 and 3 as amendments to their plans in subsequent years. More information will be provided about the amendment process in the coming months.

Recommended spending on evidence-based programs

The Student Opportunity Act significantly increases state aid to those districts with limited local revenue capacity and large numbers of high-need children. Although DESE acknowledges that all districts are facing rising costs associated with their core operating budgets, the spirit of the SOA calls for those districts receiving significant incremental state aid to devote the bulk of their new Chapter 70 revenue to evidence-based programs. We also encourage districts, to the extent possible, to allocate other new or existing resources to evidence-based programs, sufficient to significantly improve student outcomes and close achievement gaps over time.

To assist long form districts in developing their FY21 budgets for evidence-based programs, DESE has provided a spreadsheet called ***Recommended SOA Programs Budget – Chapter 70.*** This spreadsheet details each district's Chapter 70 increase under the Governor's House 2 budget for FY21, less a reasonable amount for inflation, based on the 15-year average inflation rate of 2.4% applied to each district's FY20 foundation budget.

The minimum amount recommended for districts to spend on SOA evidence-based programs is the difference between the incremental FY21 Chapter 70 aid (House 2) and this inflation factor for ongoing expenses. However, this recommendation only pertains to districts' incremental FY21 aid as stated above. All districts, even those receiving smaller amounts of incremental aid, are expected to invest in evidence-based programs to support student subgroups, including by using other local, state or federal funding sources or reallocating existing resources if necessary.

If districts expect to deviate from the recommendation on budgeting for SOA programs, please contact SOAplans@doe.mass.edu so we can follow up with you. We will want to better understand your district's current financial condition in advance of your plan submission.

Milltown Public Schools
Student Opportunity Plan: SY 2021-2023

→ Commitment 1: Focusing on Student Subgroups

Which student subgroups will require focused support to ensure all students achieve at high levels in school and are successfully prepared for life?

As an urban Gateway district in the Commonwealth, the student population of Milltown Public Schools (MPS) is majority minority, and nearly all of our 8,900 students are members of one or more traditionally underserved student subgroups. Our student population is 56 percent Latino, 24 percent white, 16 percent black, and 4 percent Asian. In addition, 23 percent of our students are English learners, 21 percent are students with disabilities, and 66 percent are low-income. Based on our district's data described below, MPS needs to work on multiple fronts to effectively address the needs of all students.

In reviewing progress by subgroups on core MCAS achievement and growth metrics over the past five years, we see that the performance of our Latino and black students has slightly improved, and the performance of our English learners and students with disabilities has remained flat. By contrast, our white and Asian students saw gains on these metrics. When looking at this data, it is clear that improved performance of our white and Asian students has driven the majority of our gains, particularly over the past two years.

Digging further into the data, we note several trends in student performance across grade levels. Across the district, subgroup performance gaps generally 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. These trends hold for black and Latino students, English learners, and students with disabilities, with performance gaps for the latter two groups the widest among subgroups at the high school level.

In high school, we further note two additional trends. Student engagement in school, as measured by a district-wide student survey, is lowest in high school, with fewer than 40 percent of students saying they feel engaged on a typical school day. Second, college persistence levels are a challenge across all student groups, including for white and Asian students, with a district average of 20 percent of students persisting after the first year of college.

In reviewing elementary school trends, we picked up one bright spot. Five years ago, MPS opened two full-day pre-kindergarten classrooms at two of our elementary schools (Alcott and Emerson). These students reached third grade last school year, and the results were significant. In particular, black and Latino students who participated in the program saw significantly higher proficiency rates on the mathematics MCAS and slightly higher proficiency rates on the ELA MCAS, both of which led to reductions in performance gaps between these students and their white and Asian peers. Students with disabilities in the pre-kindergarten program also made greater progress as compared to their peers who did not participate.

After reviewing this data, we summarize the following conclusions:
- Full-day pre-kindergarten can increase student readiness and performance, particularly for black and Latino students and students with disabilities.
- Disparities in student subgroups performance are apparent as early as third grade.
- Our student subgroups face growing challenges in middle school, leading to increased disparities for black, Latino, English learners, and students with disabilities.
- In high school, performance gaps remain wide, and are accompanied by declining student engagement among high school students. Furthermore, low college persistence rates are a challenge across all student groups, including white and Asian students.

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

What evidence-based programs will your district adopt, deepen, or continue to best support the closure of achievement and opportunity gaps? What resources will you allocate to these programs?

The Student Opportunity Act offers an opportunity for MPS to commit to additional evidence-based programs to close opportunity and achievement gaps among our student subgroups. The Department has recommended that, based on our district's projected increase in Chapter 70 state aid and less a reasonable factor for inflation, MPS should allocate a minimum of $2.8 million in Year 1 (FY21) incremental Chapter 70 funds towards evidence-based programs. Based on internal projections, we anticipate that incremental Chapter 70 funds for evidence-based programs in Years 2 and 3 will be in the range of an additional ~$2.2-3.4 million each year.

We intend to use our Student Opportunity Act funds to adopt or deepen three new programs, and intend to make multi-year, sustained commitments to these priority areas:

1. Expand **full-day pre-kindergarten programming for 4-year-olds alongside a robust early literacy program for grades pre-K to 3** at four of our elementary schools.

2. Start an **Early College program** at Milltown High School focused primarily on students under-represented in higher education and aligned to the Massachusetts Early College designation criteria.

3. Launch an **Acceleration Academies program** for select middle school students district-wide.

In addition to the narrative below, the accompanying budget file provides a detailed FY21 budget for these programs totaling $2.92 million, which is over $100,000 above the recommended minimum. These investments are as follows: $1.53 million for expanded pre-kindergarten and $995,000 for early literacy programming; $235,000 for Early College; and $159,000 for Acceleration Academies.

Evidence-based program #1: Expand full-day pre-kindergarten programming for 4-year-olds alongside a robust early literacy program for grades pre-K-3 at four of our elementary schools

*Students impacted: Additional pre-kindergarten classrooms will serve **120 students** in Year 1 (SY21) and will expand further to serve an additional 180 students by Year 3 (SY23). In addition, over the three years, we will reach approximately **2,000 students** with high-quality early literacy programs in the four schools housing pre-kindergarten classrooms.*

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 and enrollment in new pre-K programs that will flow seamlessly into continued strong early literacy instruction in grades K-3.

In Year 1 (SY21), MPS will open eight new classrooms of full-day pre-kindergarten and begin implementation of early literacy programs at Alcott Elementary, Emerson Elementary, Thoreau Elementary, and Longfellow K-8 School.

Our pre-kindergarten model will be structured based on the evidence-based model below. This fall, current Milltown pre-K and early elementary educators had an opportunity to visit model pre-K programs to observe firsthand key features we intend to enhance and/or adopt in Milltown:

- All pre-K educators will hold a degree in early childhood education and will be prepared to support the needs of all incoming students
- We will further research and adopt high-quality curriculum materials that are aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and based on national models in early education.
- We will establish an extensive progress monitoring and assessment system, ensuring student needs are being identified and addressed in real time.

- Teachers will receive professional development throughout the year to enhance their practice, with expert coaches providing embedded support in the classroom.
- We will ensure all classroom settings are appropriate for pre-K students and culturally responsive.
- Pre-K classrooms will feature small class sizes with two educators for 20 students.
- We will seek accreditation for our programming by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).
- We will hire a pre-K coordinator and family engagement specialist to support the individual needs of families, as well as our efforts to recruit students of color and English learners into the program.

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:

- Establishing school-based literacy teams, including school and district personnel, to ensure program alignment and success across classrooms.
- Adopting high-quality, evidence-based literacy curricular materials for all core content areas (including science and social studies), in pre-K and grades K-3.
- Using valid assessments to identify instructional needs and to monitor progress.
- Differentiating, scaffolding, and accommodating the core curriculum to ensure equitable access for all students.
- Implementing evidence-based interventions to address individual student needs.
- Providing initial and ongoing professional development and support to teachers, leaders, and support staff, through embedded instructional coaches and external PD providers.

Throughout the rest of this school year, we will begin planning for both the expansion of pre-K and the initial implementation of a robust early literacy program in grades K-3. Key activities will include establishing school-based literacy teams, selecting high-quality instructional materials, hiring instructional coaches and interventionists, securing classroom equipment and materials, and providing teachers and school leaders with professional development to prepare them for implementation. We will also need to purchase specialized classroom furnishings for pre-K classrooms.

In Year 1 (FY21), 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.

In the following years, we will focus more intensively on selecting and utilizing appropriate interventions. Teachers will receive training on specific evidence-based interventions that complement the adopted instructional materials, while instructional coaches provide ongoing support to educators to implement interventions appropriately.

Evidence-Based Program #2: Start an Early College program at Milltown High School aligned to the Massachusetts designation criteria

*Students impacted: This program will launch by serving an initial cohort of **100 9th grade students** in Year 1. We expect to expand it to 300 students by Year 3, with the program fully rolled out by SY24 with 400 students (100 per class).*

In close partnership with our local community college, Milltown High School will build and deliver a high-quality Early College program. An explicit goal will be to serve students who have been historically under-represented among post-secondary degree holders in our community. Our Early College program will align to the core model components outlined in the Commonwealth's designation criteria, and we will apply for the state designation in the spring of 2020.

Critically, we will immediately hire two key staff members who are dedicated to Early College management. These positions will initially have wide-ranging responsibilities, from building and maintaining a very strong and strategic relationship with our college partner to ensuring coordination of class schedules and reviewing student outcomes.

We used the five guiding principles of the Early College designation to begin designing our program:

1. **Equitable access**.
   - o We will work closely with middle school guidance counselors to begin recruiting students and their families in the 8th grade and select our Early College cohort for entry in 9th grade. We will focus on recruiting students who express interest and commitment to Early College, but without consideration of prior academic performance. Our focus will be to develop a robust 9th and 10th grade curriculum to prepare our students to succeed in credit-bearing college courses by 10th grade. We will provide intense academic coaching for students on the cusp of readiness. Our ultimate goal is for each cohort to reflect the broad and diverse student population and community we serve.
   - o Our math and ELA faculty will work with their college counterparts to align curriculum, and 9th grade advisories will include a strong focus on college readiness skills and career exploration.
   - o Further ensuring that as many students take advantage of Early College as possible, all courses will be taught by college faculty during the regular high school day; buses will take students to and from the college campus in the 11th and 12th grades; and there will be no fees for students.

2. **Guided academic pathways**.
   - o Beginning in 10th grade, Early College students will follow a sequenced set of courses aligned with local labor market needs, that are gateways to college-level courses that are credit-bearing and in the MassTransfer block. Based on an initial analysis of our regional labor market data, we are exploring offering up to four pathways with strong job growth and healthy wages: Health and Life Science, Information Technology, Business, and Education.
   - o Students will earn at least 12 transferable college credits, but our block schedule will give students the opportunity to take significantly more credits – up to a full year's worth of college credits.

3. **Enhanced student supports.**
   - o Early College combines rigorous academics with first-hand experiences in an unfamiliar college environment. While we will encourage students to access supports offered by our college partner (an important habit they will carry forward once they fully matriculate in college), Early College staff at Milltown High will also provide enhanced supports on the high school campus.
   - o With our college partner, we will implement an early warning system that alerts our dedicated Early College staff to points where students are struggling. Robust, individualized academic and guidance supports will then be developed and provided. Through Early College, our students will have access to staff that can help them build their skills in navigating college (course schedules, deciphering syllabi, etc.), and our guidance staff will be specially trained to advise them on their college applications, selection, and financial aid.

4. **Relevant connection to career.**
   - o We will offer multiple experiences that connect college with career. The 9th grade advisory will include career orientation, with goal-mapping and exposure opportunities through business partners. College coursework will introduce students to opportunities in their chosen career pathways, and internship opportunities will be aligned with our pathways.

5. **Robust partnerships**.
   - o For years, many of our students have participated in dual enrollment coursework with our college partner. While we recognize that dual enrollment and Early College are not the same, this has allowed us to establish close relationships.
   - o We plan to create robust governance structures specifically for Early College to ensure joint ownership of student success and timely communication, including an executive committee that will meet quarterly and a steering committee made up of senior program management and faculty from the high school and college who will meet monthly.

Evidence-based program #3: Launch Acceleration Academies for middle school students

*Students impacted: The Acceleration Academies will serve approximately **200 students** in grades 6-8 in Year 1, with the possibility of expansion to the elementary or high school levels in later years.*

In order to support our middle school students in closing achievement gaps, MPS will begin a multi-year commitment to an Acceleration Academies program for our two middle schools, Milltown North and Milltown South. The Academies will take place during February and April vacation weeks and run for the entire week (five days). Each Acceleration Academy will focus on a specific content area, with ELA as the focus in February, and math and science as the focus in April. As part of the program, students will receive at least four hours of high-quality, targeted instruction in the same subject area each day for the entire week. Core content teachers will teach the same cohort of 10-12 students during the Academy and will have at least one planning period each day when students attend a specials class. We expect the program to serve roughly 10 percent of students from each grade level at the two middle schools, for a total of 200 students.

To support planning for the week, teachers will receive high-quality professional development in creating standards-aligned, engaging lessons along with relevant data for their student groups. Additionally, teachers will be provided with curricular materials and any other necessary resources to use for the week.

Because the Acceleration Academies will take place during school vacation weeks, students will be invited but not required to attend the Academies. Students will be invited to participate in the Academies by analyzing and grouping students based on common need. In keeping with a focus on student subgroups in need of additional support, MPS will target initial selection efforts to students who need additional support in specific subject areas as well as advanced students in need of acceleration. We will also ensure Academy classrooms are accessible and include services for English learners and students with disabilities.

→ Commitment 3: Monitoring Success with Outcome Metrics and Targets

What metrics will your district use to monitor success in reducing disparities in achievement among student subgroups? Select from the list of DESE metrics or provide your own. *(Please note that targets will be added to this section once SY 2020 data is released this fall.)*

1) DESE outcome metrics:
- ✓ ELA achievement
- ✓ Mathematics achievement
- ✓ ELA mean SGP
- ✓ Mathematics mean SGP
- ✓ First semester college matriculation rate
- ✓ Third semester college persistence rate

2) Custom district metrics:
- ✓ Student engagement (measured by annual district-wide student survey)

→ Commitment 4: Engaging All Families

How will your district ensure that all families, particularly those representing the student subgroups most in need of support, have the opportunity to meaningfully engage with the district regarding their students' needs?

Milltown 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. Therefore, in addition to our ongoing family potluck dinners, monthly special education parent advisory council meetings, and quarterly PTO meetings at each school, we are also committing to pilot a new parent-teacher home visiting project in MPS specifically targeted to families of students of color, EL students, students with disabilities, and those from low-income backgrounds. In this model, educators will make visits to families at their homes to engage in a dialogue about their shared goals for their students. We will measure the engagement of families who receive a home visit through a follow up survey and track the number and demographics of families reached through home visits each year.

Additionally, we will begin to bring the presidents of the local school PTOs together with district leadership bi-monthly to share best practices, receive information on upcoming district initiatives, and provide input on new initiatives and ongoing work.

Certifications:

☐ **By checking here, I certify that our district has engaged stakeholders in our district in accordance with the Student Opportunity Act**

Please summarize your stakeholder engagement process, including specific groups that were engaged:

Milltown Public Schools partnered with a local community organization, CommOrg1, to lead our community engagement efforts and ensure broad and demographically representative participation from our community. Through these efforts, we engaged the following groups: focus group of parents/guardians including PTO presidents from each school, focus group of educators, focus group of local non-profits and businesses, special education parent advisory council, EL parent advisory council, the local teachers union, and two additional community organizations: CommOrg2 and CommOrg3. Additional individuals and community groups spoke during public comment in our February and March school committee meetings. A primary concern for families was the lack of targeted support for students who are behind academically. Families were also highly interested in expanding pre-kindergarten programming and high school programs to ensure students were successful in college.

☐ **By checking here, I certify that our district's school committee voted on our Student Opportunity Plan.**

- **Date of vote:** 3/24/2020
- **Outcome:** Vote was affirmative

[District Name]

Student Opportunity Plan: SY 2021-2023

→ Commitment 1: Focusing on Student Subgroups

Which student subgroups will require focused support to ensure all students achieve at high levels in school and are successfully prepared for life?

[Insert text here]

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

What evidence-based programs will your district adopt, deepen, or continue to best support the closure of achievement and opportunity gaps? What resources will you allocate to these programs?

[Insert text here]

→ Commitment 3: Monitoring Success with Outcome Metrics and Targets

What metrics will your district use to monitor success in reducing disparities in achievement among student subgroups? Select from the list of DESE metrics or provide your own. *(Please note that targets will be added to this section once SY 2020 data is released this fall.)*

1) DESE outcome metrics:
- ✓ [Insert metrics]
- ✓
- ✓

2) Custom district metrics:
- ✓

→ Commitment 4: Engaging All Families

How will your district ensure that all families, particularly those representing the student subgroups most in need of support, have the opportunity to meaningfully engage with the district regarding their students' needs?

[Insert text here]

Certifications:

☐ **By checking here, I certify that our district has engaged stakeholders in our district in accordance with the Student Opportunity Act**

Please summarize your stakeholder engagement process, including specific groups that were engaged:
[Insert text here]

☐ **By checking here, I certify that our district's school committee voted on our Student Opportunity Plan.**

- **Date of vote:** **Outcome of vote:**

Appendix A: Detailed Requirements & Recommendations for Planning

The goal of this Appendix is to provide additional details about the Student Opportunity Act and planning requirements and recommendations. This information is organized in the order of the "Four Commitments" listed in plan templates and can further support districts in planning. The content in this section can:

- Help districts further understand the statutory requirements of the three-year plans required by the SOA.
- Provide important reference material for completing plan forms, such as the list of DESE metrics districts can choose from and the foundation budget categories districts need to reference in their plans.
- Provide more detailed recommendations for districts to consider while planning in areas such as family engagement practices.

→ Commitment 1: Focusing on Student Subgroups

Which student subgroups will require focused support to ensure all students achieve at high levels in school and are successfully prepared for life?

A. Statutory Requirements:

✓ Reducing persistent disparities in performance among student subgroups is the broad mandate of the Student Opportunity Act.

B. Recommendations:

✓ Districts should analyze their data to identify opportunity and achievement gaps for student subgroups, including students of color, English learners, low-income students, and students with disabilities.

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

What evidence-based programs will your district adopt, deepen, or continue to best support the closure of achievement and opportunity gaps? What resources will you allocate to these programs?

A. Statutory Requirements:

✓ Each district must provide a description of specific evidence-based programs it will implement (adopt, deepen, or continue) that will address persistent disparities in achievement among student subgroups.

✓ There are three ways districts can select specific evidence-based programs for their plan:
  1. Choose from the 17 evidence-based program examples identified by DESE on page 6 of this document. These have been pre-aligned to the required SOA categories.
  2. Choose a different program aligned to the first nine program categories in the SOA, as listed in the footnote on page 6 of this document.
  3. Propose a different program under category J, which the commissioner will review.

✓ If a district elects not to implement any of the evidence-based programs identified in the statute (A-I), it must explain why these programs would not effectively address persistent disparities in achievement among the district's student subgroups.

✓ For each program selected, districts must state:

- How the program and allocation of funds links to the needs of specific subgroups, including English learners and low-income students.
- Which schools the program will impact (district-wide is also an acceptable answer).
- ✓ For each program selected, districts must note the funding budgeted for this program in the upcoming fiscal year and the associated foundation budget category(ies). These funds could be across Chapter 70 or other local, state, federal, or grant-based funding sources.
- ✓ The 11 categories are: Administration; Instructional Leadership; Classroom & Specialist Teachers; Other Teaching Services; Professional Development; Instructional Materials, Equipment, and Technology; Guidance and Psychological; Pupil Services; Operations and Maintenance; Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges; and Special Education Tuition.
- ✓ Long form districts wil provide all funding information in a separate budget file provided by DESE.

B. Recommendations:

- ✓ Consider selecting from the example programs identified by DESE that are provided on page 6.
- ✓ Ensure a clear link between the needs of your identified subgroups and the programs selected.
- ✓ Focus on a small number of high-impact programs (e.g., 2 or 3) rather than providing a lengthy or comprehensive list of all programs.
- ✓ Keep descriptions of selected programs appropriately brief (see sample template for guidance on length).
- ✓ To increase purchasing power, districts could explore partnerships with other districts or collaboratives. For example, districts could work together to offer joint professional development opportunities for teachers.

→ Commitment 3: Monitoring Success with Outcome Metrics and Targets

What metrics will your district use to monitor success in reducing disparities in achievement among student subgroups? Select from the list of DESE metrics or provide your own. *(Please note that targets will be added to this section once SY2020 data is released this fall.)*

A. Statutory Requirements:

- ✓ Districts must identify outcome metrics to measure success in addressing persistent disparities in achievement among student subgroups. Districts may include outcome metrics developed by DESE, outcome metrics developed by the district, or both. Districts must also identify targets consistent with state-wide targets set by DESE. The Department will set the state-wide targets in the fall based on the indicators established by DESE's accountability system. Districts will also need to ensure that targets are added to their plans this fall (see below for more information).
- ✓ All districts and schools will continue to operate under DESE's accountability system regardless of the metrics and targets they select in their Student Opportunity Plans.

B. Recommendations:

- ✓ Select at least three outcome metrics, which could be a mix of DESE metrics and custom district metrics. (Districts must select at least three metrics but can have as many as they desire.)
- ✓ It will be simplest for districts to choose from the provided list of DESE outcome metrics.
- ✓ To the extent possible, districts should choose their metrics to align with their selected evidence-based programs.

C. Additional Guidance:

- ✓ While districts will be required to include their selected outcome metrics as part of the plans to be submitted on April 1, 2020, the required targets will be submitted as an addendum in fall 2020. For districts that selected DESE outcome metrics, DESE will automatically update those districts' plans with the associated state-determined targets. Districts that selected custom metrics will be required to input their own targets in the fall.
- ✓ Please see below for a list of outcome metrics provided by DESE. The first five categories represent outcome metrics included in the state accountability system. The final category – post-secondary success – contains two additional outcome metrics that DESE is interested in highlighting as part of a new state-wide focus.
- ✓ If districts also wish to adopt their own custom metrics, they may include them in their plans and can include a short description. If districts do not provide a description, we may follow up to request more information when targets are set. As districts consider additional outcome metrics to include, remember that DESE makes available additional data that could be used for custom metrics, such as items from the Views of Climate and Learning (VOCAL) survey.
- ✓ Please note that for the purposes of this plan, targets will be identified for each metric in a 1:1 relationship (i.e., each metric will have an associated target and visa-versa). Also, because the law specifies "outcome" and not "ouput," metrics such as "increasing the number of students served in full day pre-K" are not acceptable, as they are not outcomes.
- ✓ All metrics and targets will be broken out by subgroup performance for all subgroups when it comes to reporting on progress within the plans. Districts may wish to specify individual schools to monitor within their selected outcome metrics, but this is not required.

List of DESE-provided outcome metrics:

Category	Outcome Metrics
Student Achievement	• English language arts (ELA) achievement • Mathematics achievement • Science achievement
Student Growth	• ELA mean student growth percentile (SGP) • Mathematics mean SGP
High School Completion	• Four-year cohort graduation rate • Extended engagement rate (five-year cohort graduation rate plus the percentage of students from the cohort who are still enrolled) • Annual dropout rate
English Language Proficiency	• Progress made by students towards attaining English language 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) • Percentage of 11th and 12th graders completing advanced coursework (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Project Lead the Way, dual enrollment courses, Chapter 74-approved vocational/technical secondary cooperative education programs, and other selected rigorous courses)
Post-secondary Success	• First semester college matriculation rate • Third semester college persistence rate

→ Commitment 4: Engaging All Families

How will your district ensure that all families, particularly those representing the student subgroups most in need of support, have the opportunity to meaningfully engage with the district regarding their students' needs?

A. Statutory Requirements:

✓ Districts must provide a description of how the district will effectuate and measure increased parent engagement and include specific plans targeted to parents/guardians of low-income students, English learners, and students with disabilities.

B. Recommendations:

✓ Districts should consider family engagement at multiple levels within the district. One level addresses how school personnel will engage in discussions with individual families to address the specific needs of their children. A second level addresses how districts will engage families in overall district planning to ensure family perspectives are incorporated into ongoing district strategy. Potential ideas include:
   o Implementing home visiting programs to increase dialogue between teachers and families to best meet the needs of students, accompanied by culturally responsive training for educators to effectively engage with families.
   o Partnering with community-based organizations working with historically underserved families to develop and implement a district-wide family engagement plan.
   o Committing to a regular engagement schedule (e.g., PTO presidents from each school meet bi-monthly with district leadership).
   o Removing as many barriers to participation as possible: Holding meetings at a variety of times, including outside work hours, and providing translation, food, and child care. Consider offering transportation reimbursement or stipends.
   o Following up and following through: Sharing, through the channels used to advertise engagement opportunities, an overview of feedback received from the community and actions that the district is taking as a result.

Certifications

A. Statutory Requirements:

✓ Each district's plan must be developed by the superintendent in consultation with the school committee and shall consider input and recommendations from parents and other relevant community stakeholders, including special education and English learner parent advisory councils, school improvement councils, and educators in the school district.

B. Recommendations:

✓ School committees should vote on the district's Student Opportunity Plan, as the plan will have budgetary and policy implications. Districts will be asked whether their school committee voted, and if so, the date and outcome of the vote.
✓ In addition to certifying that the district engaged stakeholders in accordance with the requirements above, describe the engagement process of parents and other relevant community stakeholders, including a list of the stakeholder groups that were engaged.
✓ Ideas to consider include:

- o Offering multiple ways for families and other stakeholders to provide feedback – orally or in writing at community listening sessions, via online surveys or by emailing a dedicated email address.
- o Holding dedicated listening sessions at a variety of times and, in larger districts, in different locations across the district.
- o Holding separate focus groups for specific populations – e.g., families of English learners or students with disabilities – to better understand their needs.
- o Partnering with a community-based and youth-focused organization to host feedback sessions for local stakeholders and connect with historically underserved families.
- o Encouraging the school committee to solicit feedback via hearings or in the public comment section of regularly scheduled meetings.
- o Supporting school leaders in organizing school-based stakeholder engagement sessions and aggregating feedback.