**Student Opportunity Act (SOA) 2021-2023**

***Neighborhood House Charter School***

**Commitment 1: Focusing on Subgroups**

Neighborhood House Charter School’s mission states, “Our goal is that all of our students thrive at Neighborhood House, graduate high school, and pursue post-secondary education on the path to achieve life success.” NHCS is a diverse school, with 53% of our student body Black and 26% Latinx. While we have a long history of regularly outperforming Boston Public Schools and many of our Boston charter school peers on the MCAS, within our school there has remained a persistent gap between the performance and growth scores posted by our Black and Latinx students and those posted by our white students. In 2019, the most recent year for which data is available, that gap is as follows:

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| **MCAS Achievement Gaps at Neighborhood House: 2019 Data** | | | |
| **Grades 3 - 8:** | | | |
|  | Black Students | Latinx Students | White Students |
| ELA Average Scaled Score | 491.2 | 490.6 | 504.9 |
| Math Average Scaled Score | 487.8 | 488.2 | 502.7 |
| ELA Student Growth Percentile (SGP) | 47.7 | 47.7 | 50.2 |
| Math Student Growth Percentile (SGP) | 47.9 | 47.6 | 50.1 |
| **Grade 10:** | | | |
|  | Black Students | Latinx Students | White Students |
| ELA Average Scaled Score | 493.8 | 492.0 | 510.7 |
| Math Average Scaled Score | 492.3 | 491.0 | 509.0 |
| ELA Student Growth Percentile (SGP) | 42.6 | 42.0 | 51.4 |
| Math Student Growth Percentile (SGP) | 47.4 | 42.6 | 50.9 |

With NHCS poised to graduate our first class of seniors in the spring of 2021, we are keenly aware of the national data showing that Black and Latinx students experience more barriers accessing and persisting in college and achieving post secondary success than their white peers.

NHCS is committed to continuing to decrease the achievement gaps we see on internal and external assessments and to addressing systemic disenfranchisement of Black and Latinx students, ensuring the opportunities and support scholars need to chart their post secondary path and achieve their goals. In order to accomplish this we will continue and strengthen our efforts with respect to three key strategies:

1. Evaluate and update our curriculum and support our educators to implement high-quality, aligned curriculum
2. Develop and implement a high-quality college and career readiness program
3. Diversify our staff workforce through recruitment and retention to better represent our student body

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

**1. Curriculum**: We firmly believe that enacting culturally responsive curricula and teaching practices is an important lever in closing opportunity and achievement gaps. At Neighborhood House, a culturally responsive curriculum is one that responds to the diverse voices of our students, particularly voices of People and Color and others that have been historically disembodied. The NHCS Humanities’ curriculum is designed to value and reflect the experiences of our diverse student body through thoughtful, equitable and rigorous coursework that allows our students to be competitive with their white academic counterparts and allows them to take a seat at the proverbial table or empower them to create their own. Toward that end, NHCS recently launched the Kevin Andrews Leadership Institute for Racial Justice and Unity (KALI), named in honor of our founding Headmaster Kevin Andrews. With the launch, two KALI Anti-Racism Curriculum Fellows were named whose role it will be to, over the next two years, work with our principals, curriculum and instruction team, and teachers to audit and recommend changes to our curriculum to ensure it is culturally responsive at every grade level and in all content areas.

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| **FY21 budget item** | **Amount** | **Foundation Category** |
| KALI Fellows | $19,500 | Instructional Leadership |
| Advanced Placement Teacher Trainings | $3,000 | Professional Development |
| Science Lab Simulation Program | $3,000 | Instructional Materials, Equipment, and Technology |
| Document Based Questioning Curriculum | $3,750 | Instructional Materials, Equipment, and Technology |
| Novels for ELA classrooms | $2,000 | Instructional Materials, Equipment, and Technology |
| **Evidence-based program identified by the Department:** | Supporting educators to implement high-quality, aligned curriculum | |
| **SOA program categories:** | E and F | |

**2. Post-Secondary Success**: Since opening our high school in 2016, we have been working to establish a College & Career Pathways program built on the notion that there are multiple paths to life success -- with four year college being just one of them -- and that students should graduate high school with a clear vision of their future, a plan to actualize that future, and the knowledge and skills they will need along the way. The framework that we have in place includes the following components that we commit to deepening and strengthening:

* An NHCS-designed college and career readiness curriculum spanning grade 9 through 12 that helps students understand their talents, interests, and goals; match those to possible careers; and plan a course of action to reach their future educational, career, and life goals.
* Extended Campus Learning Opportunities (ECLO) to explore different career fields through “hands-on” guided visits to a range of employers multiple times over the course of the high school experience.
* Partnerships with post secondary institutions to support early enrollment and internships aligned to students’ educational and career goals.
* A robust guidance department that is well integrated with our student support and special education departments to ensure that our students can be successful while at NHCS and as they transition to their chosen post-secondary pathway.
* Tracking and support for alumni to help them be successful on their chosen post-secondary path.

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| **FY21 budget item** | **Amount** | **Foundation Category** |
| College Persistence Counselor | $62,000 | Guidance and Psychological |
| Guidance Counselors (2) | $115,000 | Guidance and Psychological |
| College Visits and Career Explorations | $19,000 | Pupil Services |
| Testing and Application Fee Waivers | $4,000 | Instructional Materials, Equipment, and Technology |
| **Evidence-based program identified by the Department:** | Early College programs focused primarily on students under-represented in higher education | |
| **SOA program categories:** | I | |

**3. Diverse Staff**: NHCS will continue to work to diversify our staff workforce to better represent our student body. Currently, about 40% of our teaching staff and leadership team are People of Color, as compared with 53% of our student body who Black and 26% who are Latinx. This has the potential to be negatively impactful for our Black and Latinx students, since research indicates that when students see themselves represented in their teachers and school administration they are more likely to have positive academic outcomes which leads to a higher graduation rate and increased post secondary success. In keeping with DESE and TNTP’s recent publication “[Promising Recruitment, Retention, and Selection Strategies](https://www.doe.mass.edu/csi/diverse-workforce/teacher-diversification.docx),” we are building a long-term diversification strategy. Elements of the plan include marketing our positions early and maintaining connection with potential new educators of color, creating a comprehensive guide for principals and hiring managers throughout the organization, and increasing retention of current educators of color through equitable compensation practices, quality of life improvements, and stipended leadership opportunities.

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| **FY21 budget item** | **Amount** | **Foundation Category** |
| Membership fees to NEMNET and SchoolSpring | $2,000 | Administration |
| Stipends for Grade-Level Leads | $28,000 | Classroom & Specialist Teachers |
| Stipends for Staff Compensation Working Group members | $4,000 | Classroom & Specialist Teachers |
| Stipends for DEI Steering Committee chairs | $13,000 | Classroom & Specialist Teachers |
| Stipends for Educators of Color Quality of Life Committee chairs | $1,250 | Classroom & Specialist Teachers |
| **Evidence-based program identified by the Department:** | Diversifying the educator/administrator workforce through recruitment and retention | |
| **SOA program categories:** | D and H | |

**Commitment 3: Monitoring Success with Outcome Metrics and Targets**

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| **Department outcome metrics** | **Custom metrics (must include targets as well)** |
| Aligned to curriculum:   * + Improved ELA mean scaled score and SGP for all groups identified above   + Improved Mathematics mean scaled score and SGP for all groups identified above   Aligned to post-secondary success:   * + First semester college matriculation rate | Aligned to diverse staff:   * + Year-to-year retention of teachers and leaders identifying as PoC at least 70%   + Percentage of newly hired teachers and leaders identifying as PoC at least 50% |

**Commitment 4: Engaging All Families:**

Neighborhood House Charter School has long recognized that family engagement is critical to cultivating successful outcomes for all students. Given our focus on these student subgroups, it is particularly important that we find ways to effectively engage the families of our Black and Latinx students. We believe it is equally important to intentionally engage all families with deconstructing white supremacy’s role in perpetuating systemic harms against communities of color.

In keeping with our family engagement policy, NHCS will continue to draw from many of our successful strategies to engage families: “town hall” meetings focused on (for example) elevating and addressing systemic anti-Blackness, Family Council meetings and events, parent/guardian-teacher conferences, opportunities for parents/guardians to participate in their student’s classrooms and curriculum, weekly email reports to families about their students’ progress that week, and connecting families to community and outside resources. With focused attention to issues of systemic racism and white supremacy in our curriculum, our culture, and in our operations, we plan to ask intentional questions and allow for meaningful reflection, as we know that moving too quickly to action can simply reproduce the systems and power inequities that need to be addressed.

We will measure the engagement of our families through attendance at events, feedback from the Family Council and through targeted surveys/focus groups, and through our annual family survey which will allow us to see any trends or differences from previous years.

**Certifications:**

**☑ By checking here, I certify that our charter school has engaged stakeholders in our community in accordance with the Student Opportunity Act.**

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

The commitments in this plan were developed based on insights and calls to action from a variety of stakeholder groups. In particular, both our Curriculum and Staff Development commitments originated in a series of meetings of Educators of Color that took place over the summer of 2020. Our commitment regarding Post-Secondary Success had its origins in a working group of families who originally inspired NHCS to consider expanding to include the high school grades. Prior to submitting it to our Board of Trustees for review and approval, the plan itself has been reviewed by members of our senior Leadership Team, as well as the co-chairs of our DEI Steering Committee, who provided feedback which was incorporated into the final draft.

**☑ By checking here, I certify that the Neighborhood House Charter School’s Board of Trustees voted on our Student Opportunity Act Plan.**

**Date of vote: January 26, 2021 Outcome of vote: Unanimously approved**