Student Opportunity Act Plan

Whitman-Hanson

# 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.*

* English learners and former English learners
* Students with disabilities

*The rationale for selecting these student subgroups.*

As noted in our strategic plan, the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District is committed to providing each student with a high-quality education that promotes student success. However, we recognize that not all student groups have experienced the same level of success to date. Based on a review of our district data, our English learners and students with disabilities are not experiencing the same level of MCAS outcomes and graduation rates as their peers.

We also note the troubling fact that students within these specific subgroups, specifically those with social/emotional disabilities, have a higher rate of absenteeism due to psychiatric hospitalizations and difficulty reintegrating back into school after a long-term absence.

We are committing to intensive work to close achievement and opportunity gaps for these student subgroups and recognize that this important work will take not just the efforts of district staff, but also our families and community.

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

Within the last year, the WHRSD has begun to adopt strategies that focus on meeting the needs of our diverse student groups. Alongside several other important strategies detailed in our strategic plan, we intend to continue, broaden and deepen our work on two important initiatives already underway.

Research Based Early Literacy Programs – A review of our special education services found an increasing rate of students being identified with specific learning disabilities in reading after participating without success in response to intervention services within the general education setting. The district was found to lack a strong Tier 1 research-based curriculum with a strongphonics-based program. The district also lacked teachers and support staff who were trained in evidence-based Tier 2 and 3 literacy programs.

## Focus Area 1: Research-based early literacy programs in pre-kindergarten and early elementary grades (E, F, and G)

We have piloted and will be selecting the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt series, Into Reading K-6. This is a comprehensive English Language Arts program that also has the online student diagnostic iRead which will be administered as a baseline and Tier 1 support for qualifying students. In addition, we have also invested in the Orton-Gillingham Sonday System Program and Training, a multi-sensory method for reading intervention to quickly identify and intervene with struggling readers. We have purchased 3 Level 1 kits that are designed for early readers through the end of second grade for each of our elementary schools and have provided an intensive training program for reading specialists, special education teachers and paraprofessionals at each of our 3 elementary schools. We plan to broaden and deepen our plan in two areas. First, we plan to purchase Sonday level 2 kits that are designed for 3rd to 8th grade to broaden services to students through middle school and secondly, we plan to include our EL teachers and tutors in the training so that our English learners can benefit from this Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount: enter number, do not use the $ character** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **Houghton Mifflin Harcourt** | **384,286.77** | **Instructional Materials, Equipment, and Technology** |
| **2** | **Sonday Level 1 Kits** | **9,850.50** | **Instructional Materials, Equipment, and Technology** |
| **3** | **Sonday PD Training** | **2,850.00** | **Professional Development** |

Focus Area 2: Facilities improvements to create healthy and safe school environments (J)

Facilities Improvement to create healthy and safe school environments- There is an increasing number of students in our district who are dealing with mental health challenges and social/emotional disabilities resulting of time outside of school due to hospitalizations or school based anxiety. In order to change school

culture to support student mental health, we have invested in a high school BRYT Program (Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition) that includes a designated classroom space, a clinical coordinator and an academic coordinator to provide short-term transitional support for students returning to class after extended mental-health related absences. In order to reduce stigma, decrease subsequent absenteeism and increase support available to these students, we are re-designing a new Student Support Center that will combine the guidance suite with the special education department. The new space will include an allocated classroom and will also provide access to social workers, school adjustment counselors, school psychologists and academic support all in one location that is easily accessible to all students in the building, therefore reducing stigma and providing access to mental health and academic support for all students.

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|  | **FY21 budget item** | **Amount (enter number, do not use the $ character)** | **Foundation Category** |
| **1** | **Facilities Improvement** | **35,000** | **Other** |

**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 Growth: ELA mean student growth percentile (SGP)
* 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).
* Custom District Metric 1: Attendance of Students who transition back to school through BRYT

**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 Whitman Hanson Regional School District 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 our families of students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, EL students and students with disabilities. In addition to our ongoing PTO meetings, school council meetings and our monthly Special Education Advisory Council meetings, we are also committed to the following family engagement strategies: family curriculum nights, game nights, information nights, family social events (spaghetti night, ice cream social) special education program family events such as "Portfolio parties," where students showcase accomplishments, expanding the Best Buddies program to the middle school and expanding the annual Best Buddies walk to attract more families from all levels, and increased communication through express articles and monthly newsletters.

**Certifications**

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

The Whitman Hanson Regional School District has engaged stakeholders in accordance with the Student Opportunity Act to ensure broad and demographically representative participation through the engagement of the following groups: focus group of parents/guardians including PTO presidents form each school, focus group of educators, special education parent advisory council, EL parents and the local teachers’ union. This was also discussed at the February and March School Committee Meeting.

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

Date of Approval: 3/25/20