



Arlington Public Schools

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*Michael Mason, Jr.
Chief Financial Officer*

To: Arlington School Committee
From: Michael Mason
Re: Student Opportunity Act (SOA) Plan
Date: January 14, 2021

Dear School Committee Members,

Attached you will find the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) Plan for Arlington that is required to be submitted to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) by Friday, January 15, 2021. The original deadline was in April 2020. There were multiple changes in the submittal deadline for the SOA plan due to funding uncertainty. In addition, earlier this week, we were informed which template we needed to use to submit the plan due to the delayed approval of the state budget.

As you know, with the passage of the SOA, the Commonwealth intended to implement the recommendations of the 2015 Foundation Budget Review Commission along with other provisions to benefit public schools of the Commonwealth.

The funding from the SOA was intended to support districts in continuing the progress to improve student achievement. The funds can be used to support continuing efforts or new initiatives to close the achievement gap that still remains for students of color, low-income students, English Learners and students with disabilities.

The SOA requires the district to use a template to submit an evidence-based plan aimed at closing persistent disparities in achievement among student subgroups. DESE created two different templates in acknowledgement that 80 percent of the initial funding presented in the original Governor's House 2 FY21 budget was going to 35 districts. Originally Arlington was one of the 35 districts due to Arlington's continued enrollment growth. As a result, we were previously required to fill out a long-form version of the SOA plan because the proposed budget provided more than \$1.5 million dollars in incremental Chapter 70 funding.

The actual incremental Chapter 70 funding for FY21 was \$590,871. The SOA plan for these additional funds is contained in the FY21 Arlington School Committee approved budget which was discussed during the budget development process.

I know you are receiving this in a very tight time frame for you to approve the submission. We ask that you review this plan and approve this plan for submission on January 15, 2021.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 781-316-3511.

Included Items:

SOA Short Form

Motions for consideration:

1. Arlington Public Schools moves to approve the included Student Opportunity Act plan for submission to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Arlington Public Schools
Student Opportunity Act
Short Form

→ 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?

Our mission statement states that Arlington educators are “*committed to helping every student achieve emotional, social, vocational, and academic success.*” In order to ensure that all students achieve at the highest level, Arlington educators consistently meet to review our annual MCAS data. Based upon the last MCAS testing results, our data exhibits that there is a disparity in how our subgroups achieve. More specifically, Arlington’s African American, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities (SWD), English Language Learners (EL), and high needs students score lower than overall district averages on the 2019 MCAS. Factors that may contribute to this disparity include a lack of diversity amongst staff, curriculum that has not been created from a multicultural perspective, a lack of culturally responsive pedagogy implemented throughout the district, access to the general education curriculum by our students on an IEP, and a need to integrate social and emotional (SEL) competencies into daily instruction.

As a result, administrators and teachers have created goals that commit district resources to strengthen Tier I instruction, evaluating current curriculum resources and practices from a multicultural and SEL learning perspective and a focus on using informal and formal assessment data to monitor student progress throughout the year.

→ 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?

- 1. Implementing Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS):** Arlington has created a 5-year plan that is focused on creating multi-tiered systems of support to respond to the academic and SEL needs of all students. The foundation of this plan is to support Tier I instruction which impacts all students. Coupled with this approach is understanding what students may need when they do not respond to Tier One instruction. The supports vary

between adding instructional resources and personnel who can support the implementation of Tier I instruction and provide targeted Tier II and III intervention.

FY21 budget item	Amount	Foundation Category
3 Math Interventionists	45,500	Classroom & Specialist Teachers, Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges
Elementary Math Coach	32,500	Classroom & Specialist Teachers, Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges
Middle School Math Support	26,000	Classroom & Specialist Teachers, Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges
2 ELL Teachers	71,000	Classroom & Specialist Teachers, Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges
Reading Teachers	136,500	Classroom & Specialist Teachers, Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges
2 Special Education Teachers	130,000	Classroom & Specialist Teachers, Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges
Social and Emotional Coach	65,000	Classroom & Specialist Teachers, Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges
Occupational Therapist	32,500	Classroom & Specialist Teachers, Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges
Physical Therapy Assistant	40,000	Classroom & Specialist Teachers, Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges
Team Chair	34,090	Classroom & Specialist Teachers, Employee Benefits/Fixed Charges
Evidence-based program identified by DESE:	Increased personnel and services to support holistic student needs (C and D)	
SOA Program categories:	(D) hiring school personnel that best support improved student performance	

2.) **Creating an Anti-Racist Learning Environment for all students:** Arlington Public Schools employs a staff that is 92.1% White. This presents a challenge since the majority of students may

matriculate through Arlington Public Schools without coming in contact with a teacher or staff person of color. It is especially problematic for our students of color who are not exposed to teacher role models who share their same race/ethnicity. Thus, preparing students to enter into a world that is diverse and requires the skill of “*...cultivating and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups*” can be a challenge without explicitly exposing them to a curriculum and instructional workforce that is representative of all cultures. To address this disparity, Arlington has created a district goal of diversifying its administrative and instructional staff and providing professional development focused on creating an anti-racist learning environment. As a result, Arlington offers an opportunity for all staff to take the IDEAS (Initiatives for Developing Equity and Achievement for Students) I course: *Anti-racist School Practices to Support the Success for All Students*. This 25-hour course is designed to introduce educators to the complex issues raised by race and racism and their impact on student learning and achievement. The course will encourage educators to recognize the link between self-awareness and professional development as a component of providing equity to all students.

FY21 Budget Item	Amount	Foundation Category
Anti-Racist PD	\$13,125	Professional Development
Evidence-based program identified by DESE:		Supporting educators to implement high-quality, aligned curriculum
SOA Program categories:		Increased or improved professional development (E)

3.) Technology Platforms

Arlington Public schools invested in several platforms that support instruction and close achievement gaps across the district. In general, these tools have impacted our support by generating additional opportunities for practice, both in school and at home, provide additional opportunities for targeted support for identified gaps for students in subgroups, and for providing formative data for guiding future Tier I instruction.

For the current school, the k-12 mathematics department expanded the use of two digital platforms to enhance skill building, data collection, and asynchronous support for all students. Dreambox, an adaptive standards based platform, was expanded to all students in grades k through six. IXL, a standards based skills platform, was expanded to all students in grades 6-12.

The English department expanded the use of Raz Kids and Scholastic Pro at the elementary level and IXL for grades 6-12. With the use of these platforms, we have been more efficient in identifying students of concern as well as assigning work that will support their growth. All teachers had several professional development opportunities during the summer

→ **Commitment 3: Monitoring Success with Outcomes 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.

1.) DESE outcome metrics:

- a.) ELA mean SGP
- b.) Mathematics mean SGP
- c.) Four-year cohort graduation rate

2.) Custom district metrics:

- a.) 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?

Arlington Public Schools strives to create effective and trusting relationships with all families. The connection between school personnel and families is a key factor in raising student achievement and ensuring the social and emotional well-being for all students. This is especially significant for the district goal of decreasing the opportunity gap between Arlington's student subgroups. The district has contracted with Panorama Education to survey all families. The results from the survey will be disaggregated to determine areas that need attention.

Through training with Panorama technical assistance, participation in DESE MTSS Academies (PBIS, SEL/MH, CRT) and the Commitment to Equity with School Reform Initiative and Pegasus Springs, administration and teacher leadership will bring climate data, student learning, student engagement and staff climate data to professional learning communities and integrate efforts into a whole child, whole school, whole community approach, ensuring families and students are at the table.

Certifications:

Arlington Public Schools throughout the budget process and development of this plan engaged the school committee, district administration, AEA union leadership, and school site councils. Several meetings were held where principals were able to present and engage with the school committee in regards to the needs of each of their schools. In addition, AEA union representatives also were provided with the opportunity to present their needs to the school committee and district leadership. Also, principals consulted each with their school site councils to help provide feedback and understand the needs and wants of the community.