




March 19, 2024

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Approval of the Cambridge Public Schools Student Opportunity Act Plan for 2024-2027

- Recommendation: That the School Committee approve the Cambridge Public Schools Student Opportunity Act Plan, a Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) requirement that is submitted every three years and reviewed annually by DESE (as of 2019). This plan addresses a subset of a district's overall initiatives, focusing on evidence-based programs and strategies that will improve the educational experiences and outcomes of students, including English learners, students with disabilities, and low-income students. The plan highlights critical, actionable evidence-based programs and strategies that are focused on rapidly improving outcomes for students with low academic performance. This plan highlights how CPS plans to enhance ongoing efforts in the years ahead.
- Description: This is a review of the Student Opportunity Act Plan, a DESE requirement which requires School Committee approval in advance of the April 1, 2024 deadline.
- Supporting Data: Please see the attached executive summary.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Victoria L. Greer, PhD  
Superintendent of Schools



VICTORIA L. GREER, PhD  
Superintendent of Schools  
135 Berkshire Street • Cambridge, MA 02141  
Vgreer@cpsd.us • 617-349-6494 • www.cpsd.us

Date: March 12, 2024  
To: School Committee Members  
From: Victoria L. Greer, Superintendent of Schools  
Re: Cambridge Public Schools Student Opportunity Act 2024-2027

Attached is the plan for the Student Opportunity Act. Below is background information provided by DESE intended to provide context for this application.

### Student Opportunity Act Plans Background

The Student Opportunity Act (SOA) requires each district to create an evidence-based plan for reducing persistent disparities in achievement across student groups, which must be submitted for the commissioner's review on a three-year cycle. The Student Opportunity Act (SOA) was enacted in 2019, injecting significant new funding into the Commonwealth's educational system, with a focus on providing funding to districts serving students with the greatest needs. The law also included a critical provision that requires every district to set clear targets for improving disparities in achievement among student groups and develop a three-year plan to implement evidence-based strategies to meet their targets.

### District Improvement Plans vs. Student Opportunity Act Plans

Two key plans that districts produce on a regular basis are District Improvement Plans (sometimes framed as district strategic plans) and SOA plans. While both plans cover multiple years, there are some important differences. The District Improvement Plan (DIP) serves as a comprehensive plan that describes the *full set of strategies* that a district will implement to support *all students* in their district. By contrast, the SOA Plan addresses a subset of a district's overall initiatives, focusing on evidence-based programs and strategies that will improve the educational experiences and outcomes of students, including English learners, students with disabilities, and low-income students. To that end, the district's SOA plan should spotlight critical, actionable evidence-based programs and strategies that are focused on rapidly improving outcomes for students with low academic performance. Below is an executive summary.

Cambridge Public Schools delivers an inclusive, safe, high-quality learning experience that cultivates every student's potential, works to dismantle educational inequities, and strengthens family and community partnerships. Specifically, our work aims to address existing disparities in achievement among student groups, with a particular focus on accelerating improvement for African American/Black students, low-income students, and Hispanic or Latino students after analyzing and reviewing MCAS data.

Specifically, our work is centered around three areas of focus:

1. Administering evidence-based early literacy screening and intervention tools.
2. Selecting and implementing high-quality, district-aligned mathematics curriculum across grades K-5; and
3. Implement targeted, multi-tiered academic support and intervention through a high dosage tutoring program, acceleration academies, and summer learning programs.

Our strategy is to provide quality Tier 1 instruction early in a students educational journey and provide multi-tiered academic support and intervention as needed.



# CPSD FY2024 Plan Submission

**DUE April 1, 2024**

This plan submission is organized into five sections. Each section describes key planning steps you should take and questions you will answer in GEM\$ when you submit your plan.

## SOA Plan Cambridge Public Schools

### Section 1: Summarize your district's plan

*Please write 1-2 paragraphs summarizing your 3-year SOA plan.*

Cambridge Public Schools delivers an inclusive, safe, high-quality learning experience that cultivates every student's potential, works to dismantle educational inequities, and strengthens family and community partnerships. Specifically, our work aims to address existing disparities in achievement among student groups, with a particular focus on accelerating improvement for **African American/Black** students, **low-income** students, and **Hispanic or Latino** students.

Our strategy is to provide high quality, equitable Tier 1 instruction early in a student's educational journey and provide multi-tiered academic support and intervention as needed.

Specifically, our work is centered around three areas of focus:

1. Having a district aligned curriculum and administering evidence-based early literacy screening and intervention tools.
2. Selecting and implementing high-quality, district-aligned mathematics curriculum across grades K-5; and
3. Implement targeted, multi-tiered academic support and intervention through a high dosage tutoring program, acceleration academies, and summer learning programs.

Our investments are as follows: \$685,500 for multi-tiered academic support and intervention, and \$655,854 for mathematics curriculum; \$1,036,185 for early literacy curriculum, screening and intervention tools. The total investment in evidence-based strategies over the next three years will total \$2,377,539.

### Section 2: Analyze Your Data and Select Student Groups for Focused Support

*In conducting your data analysis, where did you observe the most significant disparities in student learning experiences and outcomes? On which measures and for which student groups?*

Cambridge Public Schools (CPS) is an urban district in Massachusetts that serves 6,915 students. CPS serves a diverse student population, including students who identify as Hispanic/Latino (14.3%), white (37.5%), Black (22.5%), and Asian (14.4%). In addition, 11% of our students are English learners, 22.8% are students with disabilities, and 35.5% are low-income. In total, CPS serves 52.9% state-identified high needs students.

Examination of our MCAS data reveals disparities among the different demographic groups served in our district. Specifically, Black/African American students (8-point decline), low-income students (6-point decline), and Hispanic/Latino students (2-point decline in math) performance declined on either ELA or Math MCAS from 2019 to 2023.

We also find an over-representation of our African-American/Black and Hispanic/Latino students in our most recent lowest performing students list issued in January 2024, with these students disproportionately represented in the lowest quartiles (47% and 40% respectively).

Further, our chronic absenteeism data reveal that our Hispanic/Latino and low-income students have some of the



highest rates of absenteeism in our district, with the highest rates in grades 9-12.

To summarize, our data suggest the need for three areas of focus:

1. **District-aligned ELA curriculum and Early Literacy screening and intervention**
  - While our 3-8 ELA MCAS data has returned to pre-Covid levels overall, we see that some student groups remain below pre-Covid achievement and are on the lower end of growth compared to other student groups (African-American/Black students, students who are low income, students who are Multilingual learners).
  - Disparities among student groups begin early, so it is critical to prioritize early identification and support for our youngest learners.
2. **District-aligned mathematics curriculum in grade K-12**
  - The decline in math MCAS scores indicated a need for strong tier 1 instruction, informing the need for a culturally relevant, aligned, core curriculum to support our students.
3. **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support**
  - Persistent gaps in academic achievement suggested the need for intensive, targeted intervention ELA and math in addition to supports students access during the school day

***What does your deeper analysis (including the triangulation of multiple types of data) suggest are the best ways to address these disparities across student groups?***

Below, we summarize how we intend disparities among student groups based on our data

1. **To expose students to high-quality, equitable Tier 1 instruction:** We will continue year 2 of our math and 6-8 ELA/literacy curriculum implementation by supporting our staff with continued professional learning on these curricular programs. Professional learning sessions will focus on both the content and embedded routines, as well as unpacking of upcoming units.

We will engage in peer observation and school-based coaching across the district to build educator capacity and understanding of the new curriculum. In grades 1-5 we will adopt a new literacy curriculum: Amplify's CKLA (2nd Edition), in addition to Amplify's dual-language program: Caminos. The CKLA adoption and professional learning process is inclusive of a diverse, interdisciplinary working group of directors, educators and coaches representing each of our elementary schools and departments to ensure implementation is consistently aligned, supported and successful.

2. **Early Literacy Screening and Intervention:** We will continue to provide targeted, multi-tiered literacy support and intervention as we launch year 2 of the mCLASS universal screener and mCLASS Intervention program for students in grades K-2. These programs provide core educators and interventionists with tailored, data-driven lessons to provide targeted, skill-based small-group instruction for students with reading difficulties.
3. **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support:** First, we will build on the pilot of the Excel Tutoring program in the 2023-2024 school year and continue to provide after school, high dosage tutoring for students with the greatest needs in grades 3-8. Second, we will continue to offer vacation week acceleration academies in math, and add acceleration academies in ELA based on student need. Third, we will continue to provide academic summer programming in ELA, Math, and MCAS prep for students with greatest levels of need.

***Based on your identification of the greatest disparities in outcomes, which student groups will require focused support for rapid improvement as you implement your evidence-based programs over the next three years?***

- Black/African American Students
- Hispanic/Latino Students



- Low-income students

### Section 3: Set Ambitious Three-Year Targets for Improving Student Achievement

**Confirm that your district will use DESE's three-year targets for increasing performance for the "Lowest Performing Students" group in ELA and math.**

Cambridge Public Schools will adopt the three-year improvement targets established by DESE for the "Lowest Performing Students" group as our district's SOA plan improvement targets.

### Section 4: Engage Families/Caregivers and other Stakeholders

**Describe the approaches your district uses to regularly engage with families/caregivers. In your response, please be sure to address what steps you will be taking to meaningfully engage with families/caregivers of student groups you are targeting for accelerated improvement as this plan is implemented.**

Our district objectives for Family Engagement are the following: *removing barriers to access and creating and maintaining safe and welcoming schools*

- Identify Barriers to access for caregivers and families at school and district level.
  - This includes engaging with SEPAC, ELPAC, and utilizing our bilingual liaisons.
- Extend, improve and sustain programming that partners with parents, caregivers and community partners
- Utilize student data and outcomes to assess efficiency and effective use of division funding to ensure student focused impact (Example: improve absenteeism rates by collaborating with families in data informed targeted way)
- Implement targeted programming that lifts and amplifies family and caregiver perspective and voice to ensure meaningful feedback and two-way communication is an asset that supports strong relationships between home and school.
- Implement target programming that supports and effectively engages minoritized, marginalized parent/caregiver demographic populations. (Target needed wrap-around supports for families and students beyond the classroom)
- Maintain and extend district and school based partnerships in order to maximize resources
- Continue to build on district and school-based professional learning that targets and incorporates best practices on impact engagement.
- Our target student populations are impacted across these initiatives.

#### Measuring Family Engagement:

- Ensure that we disaggregate all data and pay specific attention to Black, low income, and Hispanic/Latino achievement demographics
- Partner, support, track and assess school-based parent/caregiver engagement (Ex. Listening Sessions, Open House, Affinity parent group engagement, etc.)
- Incorporate additional strategies based on feedback data from initiatives and programs.
- Assess implemented (target strategies) at school level and district level semi-annually) including incorporation of the district school-climate survey data results
- Establish and build district and school based PD based on all data collected and calibrated against overall student outcomes

**Describe the ways in which you engaged different stakeholder groups in the development of your three-year SOA Plan. How have you integrated the perspectives of those groups into the three-year plan? How will you continue to engage stakeholders throughout the implementation of your plan?**

The CPS Family Engagement team has done and will do the following:

- **23-24'** Continue to pilot academic community social learning sessions. The purpose of these sessions is to share important highlights, this includes implementation of plans and strategies connected to curriculum and



instruction that impacts student learning. These sessions are in collaboration with a variety of members from the academics teams from teachers to content directors and coaches. These sessions include a variety of student support resources for caregivers, models and demonstrations of actual classroom activities as well as Q&A and feedback for all caregivers that attend.

- Incorporated a district wide community budget process to engage caregivers and families in learning, Informing and feedback sessions on school-based and district budgetary processes. This engagement has been done throughout the year and is facilitated in collaboration with a variety of caregiver groups (Special Ed parents advisory, English learners parent advisory, Cambridge families of Asian descent, Cambridge families of color coalition and other groups) with the CPS budget office, and the Family Engagement office. The purpose here is to support caregivers and increase their capacity to advocate more explicitly for essentials for their scholars. This is one really important way to remove barriers to access-Information!
- **24-25'** Continue to build and reinforce trust by creating initiatives that allow for caregivers to educate schools and the district on how culture and background impacts how various groups experience within our structures and processes. An example would be coordinating offerings of ESOL classes for caregivers who are immigrants or don't speak English as their first language in partnership with caregiver affinity spaces (Haitian-creole, Latinx/Spanish as well as Amharic). These experiences and partnerships also create opportunities for learning for school-based and district staff and educators so we can see, hear and understand why we might need to adjust or make shifts. (Ex: to curriculum or tiered interventions). These spaces also increase belonging and with a stronger connection between home and school we (district & caregivers) have more potential to collaborate on additional student-centered impacts like absenteeism.
- **24-26'** Preliminary (Stages) of incorporating -More Intentional collaboration across district level, school level and caregiver levels by designing and implementing a district-wide Family and Community Advisory Committee. This committee will be comprised of individual representation of multiple school and district wide caregiver groups (SEPAC, LPAC, Haitian Creole Caregiver group, CFAD, CFCC, Ethiopian/Amharic speaking, Muslim Caregiver group and school council representatives). This advisory committee will serve for a maximum of two-years and collaborate, support and guide the district wide objectives, planning and implementation of initiatives that impact CPS strategic objectives that impact Family and Community Engagement.

**Confirm you engaged with the following stakeholder groups in the development of this plan: parents/caregivers, special education and English learner parent advisory councils, school improvement councils, and educators in the school district.** Yes, CPS engaged stakeholders through events such as Community Socials and Rolling Resources. We've received feedback from stakeholders in our community budget meetings and on school councils as well.

**Confirm that your school committee voted to approve this plan and provide the date of the vote.** Yes, we expect our school committee to approve our plan on March 19, 2024.

## Section 5: Select Evidence Based Programs to Address Disparities in Outcomes

**Select the Focus Area that your district will prioritize over the next three years to address the academic disparities identified in your data analysis.**

**2.1 Select and skillfully implement high-quality and engaging instructional materials that support culturally and linguistically sustaining practices and foster deep learning**

**Which EBPs will your district implement within this Focus Area?**

**Early Literacy Screening and Intervention:** Implementation of the mCLASS universal screener/diagnostic and mCLASS intervention program for students in grades K-2, with data-driven, skill-based small-group instruction for students demonstrating reading difficulties.

**Provide a short description of what your district has in place now related to this EBP and what you anticipate will be in place by the conclusion of the plan's implementation (by June 2027).**

We are in the process of developing a comprehensive, multi-tiered literacy ecosystem inclusive of: newly adopted, high-quality Tier-1 CKLA curriculum; research-based early literacy screeners and diagnostic tools; and tier-2 and tier-3



mCLASS intervention tools and resources. Inclusive, district and grade-specific leadership teams are leading this work.

In 2023-2024, we:

- Provided initial and ongoing professional development and support specific to mCLASS screener, mCLASS intervention and Heggerty curriculum to teachers, leaders, and support staff, in addition to ongoing, job-embedded coaching to ensure evidence-based Tier-2 and Tier-3 interventions are implemented to address individual student needs.
- Supplemented mCLASS Intervention program with specific, research-based guidance & supplemental resources for multi-tiered literacy supports and interventions across grade levels.
- Provided comprehensive PD in the Science of Reading through LETRS for 260+ educators, coaches, interventionists and school leaders.
- Completed an inclusive, consensus-based curriculum review process that led to the selection of a high-quality, research-based literacy curriculum for elementary grades.
- Restructured the ELA/Literacy Department to include supervision, support and inclusion of literacy interventionists in monthly meetings and professional learning opportunities to deepen dept alignment of resources & practices.
- Provided professional learning and ongoing job-embedded coaching to support targeted, data-driven small-group opportunities across tiers of instruction.

In Year 2 (FY25), we will focus primarily on core literacy instruction and intervention in early childhood grades. With support from instructional coaches, educators will implement the adopted instructional materials, participate in ongoing curriculum-specific professional development, and utilize screening assessments and intervention tools to inform, plan and provide equitable literacy instruction. In addition, we aim to achieve the following goals:

- Adopt and continue to align common, research-based and culturally responsive curricular materials & practices across elementary grades.
- Ensure at least 90% of students performing below grade-level receive data-driven, multi-tiered intervention opportunities that include research-based assessments, instructional materials and practices, to efficiently and effectively address literacy difficulties.
- Provide professional learning and ongoing coaching opportunities for educators, coaches and school leaders, to ensure all student demographic groups meet state accountability targets for ELA growth and achievement, consistently closing disparities in student outcomes.
- Provide ongoing communication, presentations and community forums related to curriculum, assessments, interventions and available resources, to strengthen staff and caregiver partnerships and supports. Receive an average session feedback score of at least 4.0 (of 5).
- Develop, implement and support consistent expectations, data-collection systems and tools to ensure and support the impact of coaching and intervention on students' academic outcomes.

***Which schools will be impacted by these efforts (answer can be district-wide)?***

All elementary schools, K-5 schools

***What is the anticipated amount of funding that will be allocated to this EBP over the next three years (FY25 + FY26 + FY27), across all funding sources? Total should be cumulative.***

- \$1,036,185

***Describe the anticipated allocation of funds to this EBP in more detail.***

- CLKA: 600,000
- Fishtank: 80,720
- LETRS: \$ 119,460
- mClass: \$ 89,055

***Which budget foundation categories (G.L. c. 70) will be included in this anticipated annual allocation?***

Instructional Materials, Equip, Tech.



**What metrics will your district use to monitor progress on this EBP? Please keep in mind that you will be asked to report on progress against these metrics in your annual update to DESE starting next year.**

- Increase in % of students meeting or exceeding on English MCAS
- Increase in MCAS SGP on English MCAS
- Increase in iReady/mClass scores

**Select the Focus Area that your district will prioritize over the next three years to address the academic disparities identified in your data analysis.**

2.1 Select and skillfully implement high-quality and engaging instructional materials that support culturally and linguistically sustaining practices and foster deep learning

**Which EBPs will your district implement within this Focus Area?**

Supporting Curriculum Implementation

**Provide a short description of what your district has in place now related to this EBP and what you anticipate will be in place by the conclusion of the plan's implementation (by June 2027).**

We are in the implementation phase of a district aligned math curriculum for grades K-5. Simultaneously, we are supporting the continued use of this curriculum in grades 6-8. Data and research will continue to guide our implementation and include:

- Providing ongoing professional learning and support to teachers, leaders, and support staff, through building-based math coaches, district instructional leads, and external PL providers.
- Creating adaptations to assist with differentiating, scaffolding, and accommodating the core curriculum to ensure equitable access for all students.
- Implementing evidence-based interventions to address individual student needs.
- Establishing rotation schedule to facilitate learning labs, engaging in cross district observation, to ensure program alignment and success across classrooms.

Throughout the rest of this school year, we will continue to support the implementation of the math curriculum. Key activities will include:

- Providing teachers, special educators, interventionists, coaches and school leaders with professional learning to continue supporting year 1 of implementation
- Meeting in grade levels to discuss experiences, problem solve, and unpack each unit in advance.

Currently in year 1, we have focused primarily on implementing the mCLASS DIBELS-8 literacy screener and intervention tools in addition to the math curriculum in grades K-5. With support from instructional coaches, educators have been implementing the adopted instructional materials and participating in ongoing curriculum-specific professional learning.

In year 2 (SY24-25), we will continue to focus on the implementation of the math curriculum in grades K-5, while building-based math coaches provide ongoing support. We will also engage in cross district observations, using the learning lab model, to continue to support the learning and implementation by educators.

In the following years, continuous support for the math curriculum implementation will exist utilizing math coaches and district-wide department meetings.

**Which schools will be impacted by these efforts (answer can be district-wide)?**

All elementary schools, K-5

**What is the anticipated amount of funding that will be allocated to this EBP over the next three years (FY25 + FY26 + FY27), across all funding sources? Total should be cumulative.**



- Estimated \$ 655,854

*Describe the anticipated allocation of funds to this EBP in more detail.*

Example:

- Professional Development/ Rollout: \$ 247,350
- Curriculum: \$ 292,000
- iReady Diagnostic \$116, 504

*Which budget foundation categories (G.L. c. 70) will be included in this anticipated annual allocation?*

Instructional Materials, Equip, Tech., Professional Development

*What metrics will your district use to monitor progress on this EBP? Please keep in mind that you will be asked to report on progress against these metrics in your annual update to DESE starting next year.*

- Increase in % of students meeting or exceeding on Math MCAS
- Increase in MCAS SGP on Math MCAS
- Increase in iReady score from the beginning of the school year to the second screener

*Select the Focus Area that your district will prioritize over the next three years to address the academic disparities identified in your data analysis.*

1.2 Implement a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) that helps all students progress both academically and in their social, emotional, and behavioral development

*Which EBPs will your district implement within this Focus Area?*

Targeted Academic Support and Acceleration

*Provide a short description of what your district has in place now related to this EBP and what you anticipate will be in place by the conclusion of the plan's implementation (by June 2027).*

This year, our district is piloting a high-dosage, after school tutoring program for students in grades 3-8 across 10 school sites. In the coming years, we aim to:

- Provide targeted access to tutoring based on school and student need, with schools with the highest level of need receiving access to additional tutoring opportunities;
- Target tutoring supports for students from the lowest performing student groups;
- Refine tutoring offerings at the upper school level to best meet the needs of learners at this grade level;
- Provide additional training, resources, and observations of tutoring practice to refine and enhance our offerings across ELA and math; and
- Engage in ongoing program evaluation to ensure student outcomes are improving.

In addition to the tutoring program, our district currently offers Math Acceleration academies for students in grades 6-8 and an MCAS Math boot camp for high school students. We plan to expand on these current offerings by:

- Developing and offering district-based ELA and Math Acceleration academies for students with the highest levels of demonstrated need in grades 3-8;
- Targeting students from lowest performing sub-groups for recruitment and participation in acceleration academies;
- Providing professional learning opportunities and curriculum resources for educators supporting the acceleration academies;
- Expanding MCAS boot camp offerings to include both ELA and math for high school students; and
- Evaluating the effectiveness of acceleration academies and refining program design each year.

Finally, our district provides support to students through our academic summer programs for students in grades K-8. In the next three years, we will:

- Refine our selection criteria for summer programs to target supports for students with highest level of academic need;



- Target students from lowest performing sub-groups for recruitment and participation in summer programming;
- Expand summer program hours to better support students, families, and caregivers;
- Provide professional learning opportunities, observe summer sessions, and provide feedback to educators to improve practice during the summer; and
- Design program evaluation tools to analyze the effectiveness of summer programs on supporting student academic growth.

***Which schools will be impacted by these efforts (answer can be district-wide)?***

All schools

***What is the anticipated amount of funding that will be allocated to this EBP over the next three years (FY25 + FY26 + FY27), across all funding sources? Total should be cumulative.***

- Estimated \$685,500

***Describe the anticipated allocation of funds to this EBP in more detail.***

- MTSS Director
- Branching Minds Software

***Which budget foundation categories (G.L. c. 70) will be included in this anticipated annual allocation?***

Administration, Instructional Materials, Equip, Tech.

***What metrics will your district use to monitor progress on this EBP? Please keep in mind that you will be asked to report on progress against these metrics in your annual update to DESE starting next year.***

- Increase in % of students meeting or exceeding on ELA and Math MCAS
- Decrease in chronic absenteeism rates for students who access tiered supports