

Q&A Response to questions from Board Work Session on 2/25

1. How will these investments be evaluated?

To support progress monitoring and in accordance with HB3427 (Student Success Act), PPS will develop and report on five year growth targets for the state defined Common Metrics, which include regular attenders, third grade reading, ninth grade on-track, four-year graduation, and five-year completion. These will include disaggregate analysis and targets and are in addition to our local district metrics and progress markers. Per ODE guidance, the process of finalizing the targets for the Common Metrics will happen outside of this SIA application process and in direct collaboration with ODE this spring.

Additionally, the SIA application constitutes a grant agreement with the state for which PPS is required to submit quarterly reports detailing expenditures. Each year beginning July 2021, all SIA grant recipients must conduct a financial audit of the use of grant money and review their progress toward meeting the performance growth targets. Findings from the annual reviews must be made available publicly and to the governing board prior to being submitted to ODE.

2. How will Social and Emotional Learning supports be operationalized?

Social and emotional learning (SEL) will move under the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) department and we are currently engaged in a district wide assessment of our needs. Once that is complete, we will begin to prioritize the work in the five-year plan.

3. How will Special Education supports be maintained?

Students with disabilities are being supported through the SIA investment plan in a variety of ways. Investments including early learning, multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), and social emotional measures provide all students, particularly those with disabilities, with strategies that will help them be more successful in school. In the past three years, the special education budget has been increased significantly. In 2017-18, the special education department was budgeted at \$66 million. In 2019-20, the budget was increased to \$82.5 million. The 2020-21 budget is still being formulated, but due to maintenance of effort it will be above \$82.5 million.

No speech language pathologists (SLPs) are being eliminated and we have identified funding to restore the SLP bumps for schools with Communication Behavior (CB) and Intensive Skills (ISC) classrooms. A "bump" means that SLPs or school psychologists who are assigned to a school with either a Communication Behavior (CB) or Intensive Skills (ISC) class located in that building will receive a .2 FTE (one extra day a week) at that school, not based on caseload. This means the "bump" is above the contractual thresholds, thus putting that SLP or psychologist below the threshold for caseloads. The 1.0 FTE school psychologist will be restored, bringing the total number of school psychologists to 58 FTE. This is in addition to the 1 FTE floater position in the SIA budget. Additional Special Education positions include, 1 FTE bi-lingual family engagement coordinator and set-aside for 7 para-educators.

4. How will PPS be able to recruit and hire qualified and racially diverse staff in a competitive labor market?

Cultivating system-wide learning and a diverse workforce is a district priority for which we are building out a comprehensive plan with strategies, systems, and resources for recruiting, hiring, placement and supports aligned to our Educator Essentials and to diversify our workforce to reflect our student demographics. We are also in the process of developing pipelines and career lattices with multiple pathways for employment.

We have incorporated additional language in the application to make our commitment to staff diversity and creating pathways for educators of color clear. Increasing diversity of our staff is foundational to addressing the racial disparities in student outcomes.

As an immediate step for SIA staffing, we are using the administrative indirect from the SIA grant for additional staffing and recruiting positions.

5. Is Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) funding adequate? What is the plan?

This is year two of the plan that was presented to the Board last year, it is not a new plan. With the SIA funding, we are adding two TOSAs and two Restorative Justice specialists.

A critical part of MTSS is ensuring comprehensive systems for tiered and differentiated supports, services, and interventions are in place for students. Many of the SIA investments include positions that will help build and support these systems, such as adding instructional specialists, social workers, and counselors as well as investing in our curriculum, and deepening our cultural competencies and cultural-responsiveness.

6. What is the rationale for investing in class size reductions?

This investment responds to engagement from several stakeholder groups, with many of our professional educators advocating for class size reductions as a priority to improve an educator's ability to establish critical relationships with all students and provide differentiated supports. Lowering class size in Kindergarten and 1st grade provides our youngest learners with classrooms where teachers will be better able to provide one on one academic and social and emotional supports. This strategy will ensure all students begin their K-12 career on a better trajectory to learn to read and will be better poised to meet the Board's third grade reading goal. In addition to K-1, we also invested in middle schools to reduce the highest class sizes. As we embark on middle school redesign, this will become a first step to providing a structure for improving how we serve students in the middle grades.