It has been precisely one month since our last convening. So many good things have happened in the intervening time. I am thrilled to share that information, but first there is a need to tend to some important updates. Carolyn Troy, the Executive Director of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) will be putting together a committee to review SEL resources for grades 6-12. Our goal is to incorporate multiple perspectives. Accordingly, the committee will represent various roles including Assistant Director SEL, Principal, School Adjustment Counselor, School Social Worker/Clinical Director, Teacher(s), Special Education, English Learner Education, Guidance, and Curriculum. The goal is for the committee to meet January through March with recommendation of resources to be brought to school committee by Spring 2020. A similar process featuring a parallel commitment to diverse perspective will be devoted to the process for a grade 8 civics textbook adoption. By way of reminder, once a set of resources have been identified, there will be a presentation in a curriculum sub-committee meeting.

On November 26, 2019, Governor Baker signed the landmark Student Opportunity Act. On a high level, this act corrects decades-long funding shortcomings for school districts like ours in profound ways. We do not yet know specifically what the increase in state funding will be, but it will be substantive. Shortly after this momentous day, information was released with respect to some related requirements. At this point, there is neither guidance nor a high level of detail. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has shared the following requirements:

1. Establish targets and outcome measures for addressing persistent disparities in achievement among student subgroups;
2. Identify specific evidence-based programs the district intends to implement to effectively reduce these disparities;
3. Outline how Chapter 70 funds, as well as other local, state, and federal funds, will be used to implement the plan, including information about school level spending and resources for selected student subgroups; and
4. Specify ongoing plans to effectively engage families and measure family engagement efforts, including targeted plans for families of low-income students, English learners and students with disabilities.
We are already aligned in many ways with these requirements. I suspect that there will be additional guidance for reporting in short order. The Joint Committee on Education has provided a three-page summary that offers some insight (attached). There is specific language in the summary that we intend to act on right away. Case in point, the following will be a requirement:

*School districts, in collaboration with parents and community stakeholders, must develop and make publicly available plans for closing opportunity gaps. These plans will include specific goals and metrics to track success.*

Toward the end of collaboration with parents and community stakeholders, I have directed all building principals to schedule and post at one school site council meeting at which they will discuss their FY21 budget plans and solicit input from council members. These meetings must happen on or before Friday, February 14, 2020. What is more, I am planning to hold two public budget forums at which attendees will be provided the framework of our strategic plan and related budget priorities. I will also solicit input from those who attend. The dates of the forums are to be determined. We are proceeding with this plan because it reflects our core values of collaborative relationships and shared responsibility, first and foremost, but also because we are genuinely interested in the perspectives and input of the broader community.

We have an exciting update with respect to this year’s first round of assessments for the Seal of Biliteracy. In October, the English Learner Education (ELE) Department began assessments for the world language component of the Seal of Biliteracy. So far we have tested four languages of the 15 requested, including Spanish, Arabic, Korean, and French. We are proud to share that, thus far, a total of 114 students, 67% of those who have participated, have met the criteria to earn the Seal of Biliteracy. Of that 114, 39 students have met the assessment criteria for the Seal of Distinction (MCAS ELA 260, and an “Advance Low” level for the language assessment). During last year’s initial implementation of this program, 79 total students were awarded the Seal of Biliteracy, and five met the criteria for the Seal of Distinction. Beginning in February, the ELE office will assess approximately 75 more students in the remaining languages, and will also test 134 interested juniors this spring.

Related to this work, I would like to celebrate Stacey Floyd from the ELE Department who has been working with schools, students, and families in the assessment and communication of the Seal of Biliteracy. I would also like to note that this work is not going unnoticed in the state. The ELE Department is being recognized by DESE by participating in a panel at the next EL Directors’ meeting in February, as well as at MATSOL (Massachusetts Association for Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages) in May for the work being done in Lynn with the Seal of Biliteracy, as well as the efficient and effective use of grant funds for developing bilingual education in the district. This work exemplifies the district’s core values of inspiring life-long learning and inclusiveness by celebrating and valuing the linguistic assets of our school community.

Attached to this document is a formal notice of congratulations from the office of the Governor
of Massachusetts. Our application was approved to receive grant funds in the amount of $123,826 to support our diverse hiring initiative. We will use these funds to support paraprofessionals and teachers on waiver in a new pathway program, offer an MTEL preparation course for teachers, and build out a high school pathway to teaching program. This was a collaborative effort that ended with success that will yield in measurable results. I will keep you posted about the developments in these programs, but right now we are celebrating!

Finally, on the topic of celebration, Tallia Dudley, a Lynn English Senior, received awesome news on Tuesday. She was one of 1,127 students across the nation to receive the QuestBridge National College Match Scholarship, a very competitive award. QuestBridge partners with 40 elite colleges and universities across the nation and Tallia was one of 15 students to be matched with Tufts University. Tallia's $76,000 annual cost of attendance will be covered for all four years. Congratulations to Tallia and the teachers who have educated and supported her along the way!

Respectfully submitted,

Patrick Tutwiler, PhD
December 5, 2019

Dear Superintendent Tutwiler,

Congratulations! We are pleased to notify you that Lynn Public Schools has been awarded an FY20 Teacher Diversification Pilot Program grant of $123,826.

We want to thank you for your commitment towards continuing to improve the educational experience for students. Through this funding and your continued support, we hope to expand access to great educational opportunities in the Commonwealth.

You will be receiving further instructions from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on next steps, and please feel free to Sylvia Lam at sylvia.lam@doe.mass.edu or Shay Edmond at sedmond@doe.mass.edu if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Governor Charles D. Baker

Lt. Governor Karyn E. Polito
Student Opportunity Act

Fact Sheet

September 19, 2019

The Student Opportunity Act makes an unprecedented $1.5 billion new investment in Massachusetts public education, ensuring public schools have adequate resources to provide a high-quality education to students across the state, regardless of zip code or income level. Assuming inflation, over time the bill could provide an estimated $2.2 billion.

The Student Opportunity Act significantly helps school districts that serve high percentages of low-income students. At the same time, school districts across the Commonwealth will benefit from updates to the existing funding formula, along with increased state investment in other vital education aid programs such as transportation, school buildings and special education.

These new investments, coupled with policy updates, are designed to monitor and measure progress, support effective approaches to closing opportunity gaps, and deliver results for all students.

This bill modernizes the K-12 education funding and policy landscape in four areas:

1. Fully implements the recommendations of the Foundation Budget Review Commission (FBRC) to ensure that the school funding formula provides adequate and equitable funding to all districts across the state. Provides an estimated $1.4 billion in new Chapter 70 aid over and above inflation when fully implemented over the next seven years. The foundation budget is updated as follows:
   - Estimates school districts' employee and retiree health care costs using up to date health insurance trend data collected by the state’s Group Insurance Commission (GIC).
   - Increases special education enrollment and cost assumptions to more accurately reflect district enrollment.
• **Increases funding for English learners (EL) that is differentiated by grade level to reflect the greater resources required to educate our older EL students.**

• **Addresses the needs of districts educating high concentrations of students from low-income households** by:
  
  o Providing additional funding based on the share of low-income students in each district; districts educating the largest percentage of low-income students will receive an additional increment equal to 100% of the base foundation;

  o Returning the definition of low-income to 185% of the Federal Poverty Level, as opposed to the 133% level that has been used in recent years.

2. **Provides additional state financial support to help public schools and communities deliver a high-quality education to every student** by:

   • Increasing foundation rates for **guidance and psychological services** that will support expanded social–emotional supports and mental health services.

   • Fully funding **charter tuition reimbursements**, which provide transitional aid to help districts when students leave to attend charter schools, within a three year timetable.

   • Expanding the **special education circuit breaker**, which reimburses districts for extraordinary special education costs, to include transportation costs in addition to instructional costs, phased in over four years.

   • Lifting the annual cap on **Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA)** spending for school building construction/renovation by $200 million (from $600 million to $800 million), enabling more projects across the state to be accepted into the MSBA funding pipeline.

3. **Implements policy updates designed to maximize the impact of new funding in improving student outcomes and closing opportunity gaps.**

   • Establishes the **21st Century Education Trust Fund** to provide flexible funding to districts and schools pursuing creative approaches to student learning and district improvement.

   • School districts, in collaboration with parents and community stakeholders, must develop and make publicly available **plans for closing opportunity gaps**. These plans will include specific goals and metrics to track success.

   • The Secretary of Education will collect and publish data on **student preparedness in each district and high school for post-graduate success** in college and the workforce.
• Establishes a Data Advisory Commission to help improve the use of data at the state, district, and school levels to inform strategies that strengthen teaching, learning and resource allocation.

4. Identifies education policy areas requiring further analysis.
   • The Department of Revenue (DOR) and DESE are directed to analyze the method of determining required local contributions in the Chapter 70 formula for the purpose of improving equity, predictability and accuracy.
   • Establishes a Rural Schools Commission to investigate the unique challenges facing rural and regional school districts with low and declining enrollment. The Commission will make recommendations for further updates to help impacted districts and communities.
   • Creates a review of the MSBA program to assess whether or not the program guidelines need to be updated to meet district needs.