RESOLUTION AGREEMENT

Manchester Public School District
Compliance Review No. 01-11-5003

In order to resolve Compliance Review No. 01-11-5003, and without admitting or conceding any violation of Federal law with respect to the issues raised in this matter pursuant to the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), as amended, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq., and its implementing regulation at 34 C.F.R. Part 100, the Manchester Public School District (District) assures the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR), that it will take the actions detailed below.

1. Review and Assessment

By March 1, 2014, the District will complete a review and assessment of access to and enrollment in its AP, Running Start, and SNHU Dual Credit courses (collectively identified hereinafter as "higher level learning opportunities") as part of its ongoing efforts to provide all students with equal access to and equal opportunity to participate in the District's higher level learning opportunities. This review will carefully assess the underrepresentation of black, Hispanic and ELL students (collectively identified hereinafter as "underrepresented groups") in higher level learning opportunities. The information gathered in this review will be used to identify the root cause(s) of the disparity in enrollment of underrepresented groups in higher level learning opportunities. Information gathered in the review will form the basis for a plan described in Item 3 below, to implement strategies described in Item 2 below, that will increase student participation in its higher level learning opportunities with a particular focus on students from the underrepresented groups. The District may form a committee or hire a consultant or engage another assessor(s) to conduct the review and assessment and make recommendations. The District will provide any committee, consultant, or other assessor(s) with all information identified by the assessor(s) as necessary to engage in the review and assessment. The District will additionally ensure that the committee or consultant or other assessor(s) have expertise in addressing the underrepresentation of students from the underrepresented groups in higher level learning opportunities. At a minimum, the District and/or the committee or consultant or other assessor(s) will:

a) review the District's enrollment data relating to higher level learning opportunities at the high school beginning in 2008-2009, to the present, including trend data, specifically considering:
    i. rates of participation among students in underrepresented groups in higher level learning opportunities, by race, national origin, and ELL status, compared to their representation in the student body as a whole; and
    ii. the relationship, if any, between elementary and middle school performance and enrollment in higher level learning opportunities in high school, including the correlation, if any, between the levels assigned to students upon entrance to high school and their prior academic preparation and performance .

b) review and assess the efficacy of publicity and outreach provided for higher level learning opportunities at the high school, specifically considering:
   i. which methods undertaken by the District to date have been effective (or ineffective) for promoting early awareness of and student participation in the District's higher level learning opportunities;
   ii. which methods undertaken by the District to date have been effective (or ineffective) for promoting early awareness of the criteria by which students are assigned levels in high school, the significance of levels and their correlation, if any, with higher level learning opportunities; the value of high school higher level learning opportunities; and opportunities in earlier years of school that increase a student's likelihood of participating in higher level high school courses, particularly higher level learning opportunities;
   iii. the means by which students report having learned of higher level learning opportunities;
   iv. the means by which students report learning of other school offered opportunities in which participation rates are high (these can include social activities, athletic events, clubs, popular courses or programs, or other activities identified by the District as having high participation rates);
   v. the means by which parents report having learned of higher level learning opportunities;
   vi. the means by which parents report having learned of the criteria by which students are assigned levels in high school, the significance of levels and their correlation, if any, with higher level learning opportunities; the value of high school higher level learning opportunities; and opportunities in earlier years of school that increase a student's likelihood of participating in higher level high school courses, particularly higher level learning opportunities;
   vii. the means by which parents report learning of other school offered opportunities in which participation rates are high; and
   viii. what community groups or other resources are available to the District to better provide information to students and parents, including Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents and parents of students in underrepresented groups, regarding higher level learning opportunities and any opportunities at earlier years that increase a student's likelihood of participating in higher level learning opportunities at the high school.

c) assess students' interest in and awareness of higher level learning opportunities offered by the District. As part of this assessment, the District will conduct a survey of students in grades 8-12 seeking information regarding:
   i. race, national origin, and ELL status of responding students;
   ii. their knowledge of higher level learning opportunities, the benefits of those opportunities (for example, that the higher level learning opportunities offer students college credit at significant savings when compared to earning the credit while enrolled as a student at a college or university), and how they became of aware these opportunities;
   iii. their understanding of the requirements and the recruitment, selection and enrollment process for participation;

iv. their understanding of the criteria by which they are assigned course levels in the freshman year of high school, and any correlation between course levels and higher level learning opportunities;
v. their understanding of the appeal process for enrolling in a higher level than is recommended by their teacher;
vi. their understanding of, and the impact of, the penalties to student rank and GPA for withdrawing from a higher level course;
vii. their interest in the various types of higher level learning opportunities that are currently offered (i.e. Running Start, SNHU Dual Credit, and/or AP);
viii. their reasons for participating or not participating in higher level learning opportunities, including any perceived barriers; and
ix. their interest in higher level learning opportunities not currently offered, including opportunities in different subject areas.

d) conduct a survey of parents/guardians of students in grades 8-12, and relevant District staff, regarding the higher level learning opportunities offered by the District. At a minimum, the survey will obtain information that will allow the District to assess:
   i. their knowledge and perceptions of the higher level learning opportunities offered by the District, the benefits of those opportunities (for example, that the higher level learning opportunities offer students college credit at significant savings when compared to earning the credit while enrolled as a student at a college or university), and how they became of aware these opportunities;
   ii. parents/guardians' understanding of the requirements and the recruitment, selection and enrollment process for participation in higher level learning opportunities;
   iii. parents/guardians' understanding of the criteria by which students are assigned course levels in the freshman year of high school, and the significance of levels and their correlation, if any, with higher level learning opportunities;
   iv. parents/guardians' understanding of the appeal process for enrolling a student in a higher level than is recommended by that student's teacher;
   v. parents/guardians' understanding of, and the impact of, the penalties to student rank and GPA for withdrawing from a higher level course;
   vi. parents/guardians' views as to the most effective method of communicating information about such higher level learning opportunities to students and parents/guardians;
   vii. any barriers that may prevent or hinder a student from enrolling in or remaining enrolled in higher level learning opportunities; and
   viii. any interest in expanding higher level learning opportunities offered by the District.

e) identify any potential barriers to increased student enrollment in the District's higher level learning opportunities, with a particular focus on underrepresented groups, specifically considering:
   i. the number and subject matter of higher level learning opportunities;
   ii. any District policies or procedures related to eligibility for, selection for, enrollment in, or registration in higher level learning opportunities;

iii. the impact of level placement in the freshman year of high school, on student participation in higher level learning opportunities;
iv. the role of prerequisite courses, and teacher recommendations in student enrollment in higher level learning opportunities;
v. the role of high school teachers and guidance counselors in identifying students to participate in higher level learning opportunities;
vi. the descriptions of higher level learning opportunities in District publications, including its Program of Studies, with particular attention to any prerequisites; any possible bias on the part of teachers, guidance counselors, or other District staff that may be discouraging students and parents, particularly underrepresented student groups and their parents, from considering higher level learning opportunities;
vii. possible lack of teacher training and/or lack of teacher mentoring or other supports to assist teachers once they begin teaching higher level learning opportunities;
viii. adequacy of communication and outreach to students and parents/guardians (including availability of information provided to LEP parents in languages they understand) about the criteria by which students are assigned levels in high school, the significance of levels and their correlation, if any, with higher level learning opportunities; the value of and opportunities to enroll in high school higher level learning opportunities; and opportunities in earlier years of school that increase a student's likelihood of participating in higher level high school courses, particularly higher level learning opportunities;
ix. adequacy of publicity of appeal rights to enroll students in course levels above those recommended by their teachers;
x. adequacy of student preparedness for higher level learning opportunities due to inadequate rigor of study in earlier school years;
xi. student or parent/guardian concerns regarding the fees associated with the higher level learning opportunities, including any lack of awareness among students and/or parents/guardians regarding any possible assistance offered by the District to reduce or eliminate the fees associated with the higher level learning opportunities in special circumstances;
xii. peer pressure for or against participating in higher level learning opportunities;
xiii. availability and adequacy of support services for students considering enrolling and/or enrolled in higher level learning opportunities at the high school (such as counseling, peer mentoring groups, or tutoring); and
xiv. early awareness on the part of parents/guardians/students of the relationship between the elementary school/middle school performance and the high school curriculum.

f) review recommendations by the College Board for increasing participation in higher level learning opportunities among students in underrepresented groups.

g) consult with other similar public school districts concerning effective methods for increasing enrollment in higher level learning opportunities among students in underrepresented groups.

Reporting Requirements:

1. By January 15, 2014, the District will provide OCR proposed surveys described in 1.c) and 1.d) above, for OCR's review. In the event that OCR has objections to any aspects of the surveys, the District agrees to work collaboratively in good faith with OCR to reasonably address such objections.

2. By March 1, 2014, the District will provide to OCR information showing that it has completed the review and assessment described in Action Item 1 above. The District will provide OCR the opportunity, upon request, to review any and all documentation associated with these data collection steps.

2. Identification of New Strategies

By April 1, 2014, the District will evaluate the results of its review and assessment described in Action Item 1, and use that information to identify and recommend strategies to increase student participation in its higher level learning opportunities with a particular focus on students from the underrepresented groups. If the District rejects and/or modifies any recommendations made by any assessor(s), the District will provide to OCR an explanation for the rejection or the modification of the recommendation. In identifying these strategies, the District will:

a) not adopt any additional criteria that disproportionately exclude students from the underrepresented groups;

b) ensure that information regarding any changes to the District's higher level learning programs, or access to those programs, is widely disseminated;

c) consider, where appropriate, increasing the number of higher level learning opportunities for students, including encouraging teachers to teach higher level courses by, for example, providing them with any necessary training and support;

d) consider eliminating grade point average and student ranking penalties associated with withdrawing from higher level learning opportunities;

e) increase awareness of higher level learning opportunities among students from underrepresented groups, including race/ethnic-targeted recruitment and outreach efforts to directly encourage underrepresented students to consider participation, such as:
   i. asking a diverse group of students who are participating in higher level learning opportunities to speak with students in middle school and/or grades 9 and 10 to share with them the benefits of higher level learning opportunities;
   ii. asking student leaders such as heads of student organizations and sports team captains to speak with students in middle school and/or grades 9 and 10 to share with them the benefits of higher level learning opportunities;
   iii. ensuring that all students, including members of underrepresented groups, are provided with counseling at the middle and high school level that:

a. informs each student of all available and relevant program and course options, including information on the criteria by which students are assigned levels in high school, the significance of levels and their correlation, if any, with higher level learning opportunities; the value of and opportunities to enroll in high school higher level learning opportunities; and opportunities in earlier years of school that increase a student's likelihood of participating in higher level high school courses, particularly higher level learning opportunities:
    1. during individual counseling sessions; and/or
    2. during any group information sessions provided to students about high school enrollment and/or the college application process (group information sessions may include presentations by College admissions coordinators, principals, teachers of higher level learning opportunities, and voluntary testimonials from a diverse group of students enrolled in such courses, and/or interested parents/guardians); and/or
    3. through written or digital materials.
b. advises students of the significance given to course levels in high school, as well as high school higher level learning opportunities, by colleges in the admissions process and of the opportunity to receive college credit for certain higher level learning opportunities; and
c. encourages each student to enroll in programs or courses that are appropriately challenging for such student, which may include preparing the student for postsecondary level education and/or career readiness.

iv. providing messages from building principals to all parents and/or students, in languages they understand, regarding the availability of, and benefits of, higher level learning opportunities at the high school level, as well as the criteria by which students are assigned levels in high school, the significance of levels and their correlation, if any, with higher level learning opportunities; the value of higher level learning opportunities; and opportunities in earlier years of school that increase a student's likelihood of participating in higher level high school courses, particularly higher level learning opportunities;

v. notifying students who have achieved certain test scores on standardized tests, or grades in earlier courses in similar subjects, or who have been identified using tools offered by the College Board, that they should strongly consider participating in AP or other higher level learning courses; and

vi. reviewing and revising the Program of Studies to ensure accuracy and clarity with regard to higher level learning opportunities and prerequisites and reviewing and revising any elementary or middle school handbooks or programs to provide information about the academic program at the high school, including the criteria by which students are assigned levels in high school, the significance of levels and their correlation, if any, with higher learning opportunities; and opportunities in earlier years of school that increase a student's likelihood of participating in higher level high school courses, particularly higher level learning opportunities.

f) consider ways to increase student readiness for higher level learning opportunities, including, for example, by strengthening the rigor of courses in earlier grades and increasing communication between elementary, middle and high schools to ensure that students are better prepared for higher level learning opportunities in high school;

g) consider whether the current criteria, method of implementation or system in general relating to the assignment of levels to incoming high school freshman might be eliminated or altered in a way that would increase access to higher level learning opportunities;

h) increase awareness of higher level learning opportunities among parents of elementary, middle school and high school students, for example by:
   i. notifying parents of the benefits and opportunities available to students in higher level learning opportunities;
   ii. sharing information regarding academic program at the high school (including the levels) and the identification/selection process for higher level learning opportunities, if any, including information about the importance of early planning and academic preparation in the elementary and middle school years to prepare students for successful transition into high school higher level learning opportunities;
   iii. sharing information regarding the identification/selection criteria (such as test scores, teacher recommendations, prerequisites, etc.) for assignment to course levels at the high school and for higher level learning opportunities, if any, including when testing will be held;
   iv. sharing the name(s) and contact information for individual(s) who can answer questions and share information, and who are responsible for, assignment to course levels at the high school and for higher level learning opportunities at the students' respective schools and at the District Office;
   v. sharing information regarding how to appeal decisions made regarding the identification and selection of students for course levels at the high school and for higher level learning opportunities, if decisions are made by individuals other than the student; and
   vi. ensuring that the above information is provided to parents in a language they understand.

i) increase outreach to community based organizations, including those that are in regular contact with underrepresented group students and their parents/guardians regarding the criteria by which students are assigned levels in high school, the significance of levels and their correlation, if any, with higher level learning opportunities; the value of and opportunities to enroll in high school higher level learning opportunities; and opportunities in earlier years of school that increase a student's likelihood of participating in higher level high school courses, particularly higher level learning opportunities;

j) increase support for students enrolled in higher level learning opportunities such as through counseling, peer support groups and tutoring;

k) ensure that a training plan exists and is implemented for District staff regarding higher level learning opportunities, with a focus on staff involved in conducting assessments or evaluations as part of the identification/selection process for students to participate in higher level learning opportunities; the plan will include, at a minimum:
   i. a review of the enrollment demographics in higher level learning opportunities, by race, national origin and ELL status, at each school site, compared to enrollment by race, national origin and ELL status in the school as a whole, at other schools in the District and in the District overall;
   ii. a presentation by an expert regarding best practices for identification/selection and retention of students from underrepresented groups for these programs;
   iii. instruction on how to access the necessary information to identify and evaluate students for participation in these programs;
   iv. an overview of the identification/selection criteria for these programs, if any, and how they should be implemented;
   v. common misconceptions regarding which students should participate in higher level learning opportunities, and on effective methods to encourage greater participation in higher level learning opportunities among students from underrepresented groups;
   vi. an overview of parent/guardian and student outreach efforts regarding higher level learning opportunities; and
   vii. information or instruction regarding other actions the District may be taking in an effort to increase student participation in the District's higher level learning opportunities programs, including race/ethnic-targeted recruitment and outreach efforts to directly encourage students from underrepresented groups to consider participation.

l) to the extent not already accomplished by the steps above, remove any barriers it has identified to participation in higher level learning opportunities by students in underrepresented groups; and

m) monitor the effectiveness of any strategies implemented, and make changes as soon as possible if strategies are not proving effective in meeting the District's goal of increasing students' opportunities to participate in higher level learning opportunities.

By April 1, 2014, the District shall create a written report regarding the strategies identified and recommended pursuant to this section.

Reporting Requirements:

1. By April 1, 2014, the District will provide to OCR the written report described in Action Item 2, as well as the comprehensive explanation for rejecting and/or modifying any recommendations described in that Action Item.

3. Implementation of New Strategies

By April 1, 2014, after reviewing the written report of strategies identified in Action Item 2, the District will create a plan including action items and timeframes to implement those strategies. These strategies will be implemented by June 1, 2014.

Reporting Requirements:

1. By April 1, 2014, the District will provide to OCR a proposed plan described in Action Item 3 above. In the event that OCR has objections to any aspects of this plan, the District agrees to work collaboratively in good faith with OCR to reasonably address such objections.

2. By June 30, 2014, and by the same date annually thereafter, the District will report to OCR on steps it has taken to implement the plan described in Action Item 3 above. The District shall fully implement the plan described in Action Item 3 no later than June 30, 2014. The District will provide OCR the opportunity, upon request, to review any and all documentation associated with these Action Items.

3. If any District publications, including online publications, require alteration to become consistent with the plan described in Action Item 3 above, the District will update the relevant publications as soon as possible, not to occur later than September 1, 2014. Inserts may be used in printed publications until re-printing.

4. Data Analysis

Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, and annually thereafter, the District will maintain data regarding the participation of students, by race and ELL status, in higher level learning opportunities. The District will additionally re-conduct the surveys described in 1.c) and 1.d) above to gather information regarding the efficacy of strategies it has implemented. The District will review the data to identify whether there remains a statistically significant disparity in the participation of underrepresented group students when compared to peers not in the underrepresented groups, in higher level learning opportunities. The District will also consider, on an annual basis, whether the strategies and plan it has implemented have proven effective, or need to be altered. If alterations are required, the District will enact such alterations within one year of identifying the need for that change.

***Reporting Requirements*:**

1. By June 30, 2014, and by the same date annually thereafter, the District will provide to OCR the survey results and analysis, pursuant to Action Item 4 above. At a minimum, the information provided for each school year should include:

    a) the number of students enrolled in the District, by race, national origin and ELL status;

    b) the number of students who sought access to higher level learning opportunities, by race, national origin and ELL status, if different from those in a) above; and

    c) the District's analysis of whether enrollment is disproportionate for black, Hispanic and/or ELL students; and if so, what further steps the District will take to ensure an equal opportunity to participate in the District's higher level learning opportunities.[1]

No Admission of Wrongdoing:

The District does not admit any wrongdoing or violation of any law, statute, regulation or policy, and is entering into this Agreement solely for purposes of amicably resolving this Compliance Review.

Acknowledgment:

The District understands that OCR will not close the monitoring of this Agreement until OCR determines that the recipient has fulfilled the terms of this Agreement in compliance with the regulation implementing Title VI, at 34 C.F.R. § 100.3, which was at issue in this Compliance Review. Prior to the conclusion of OCR's monitoring, the District will provide documentation establishing that any disparities relating to underrepresentation of black, Hispanic and ELL students in higher level learning opportunities in the District are not the result of discrimination prohibited by Title VI and its implementing regulations. The District also understands that by signing this Agreement, it agrees to provide data and other information in a timely manner in accordance with the reporting requirements of this Agreement. Further, the District understands that during the monitoring of this Agreement, if necessary, OCR may visit the District, interview personnel and students and request such additional reports or data as are necessary for OCR to determine whether the District has fulfilled the terms of this Agreement in compliance with the regulation implementing Title VI, at 34 C.F.R. § 100.3, which was at issue in this Compliance Review. The District understands and acknowledges that OCR may initiate administrative enforcement or judicial proceedings to enforce the specific terms and obligations of this Agreement. Before initiating administrative enforcement (34 C.F.R. §§ 100.9, 100.10), or

[1] OCR is amenable to the District's continued provision of the requested information in a manner that uses current District systems or databases to reduce the burden in responding to the data request. For example, the District may submit the requested information in the form of a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Similarly, if other information is available online, the District may provide a website address or a link where OCR may access the information.

judicial proceedings to enforce this Agreement, OCR shall give the District written notice of the alleged breach and a minimum of sixty (60) calendar days to cure the alleged breach.

12/4/13
Date

Dr. Debra Livingston (or designee)
Superintendent of Schools
Manchester Public School District