

Portland Public Schools

SIA Progress Journal for Q1 and Q2 (July 1 to December 31, 2020)

1. What is changing? How are your activities contributing to the changes in behavior, actions, policies, or practices you outlined in your plan and/or toward the progress markers as outlined?

We used our (a) [PPS Vision](#), (b) PPS Strategic Plan, (c) [Racial Equity Social \(RESJ\) Justice Lens](#), and (e) the SIA needs analysis to guide budget decisions this year. We decided to reduce, maintain, and reallocate SIA investments to the general fund and focused on the following investments:

- Increased social-emotional, mental, and behavioral health supports
- Increased academic supports and targeted interventions for our most vulnerable and underserved students.

We prioritized investments into administrative FTE to help us hire and onboard new staff essential to our SIA work (e.g. mental health specialists). SIA recruiting is part of a developing recruitment strategy aimed to evaluate and revise current hiring practices. We are focusing on how our applicant screening, job posting, compensation practices, and district and building culture are racially affirming and culturally sustaining.

Increased socio-emotional, mental, and behavioral health supports

Our SIA community engagement illuminated the need to expand support for our students' mental health and wellness.

The following are selected priorities:

- PPS made substantial increases in hiring counselors, social workers, and school psychologists to support our families' mental health and wellness during CDL and LIPI.
- PPS contracted services to provide culturally responsive mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) support with a focus on ensuring accessibility.
- PPS furthered our SEL and trauma-informed care initiative. We improved coaching and partnerships by expanding our outreach and professional learning.
- PPS [increased community-centered outreach to our Latinx families](#) through our Family Engagement Specialist team, giving them increased access to the special education process and scaffolding opportunities for them to voice concerns.

We expanded socio-emotional, mental, and behavioral health support through our [RESJ partnerships](#) in five evidence-based areas, (a) culturally specific family engagement, (2) wrap around services, (3) leadership development, (4) extended day, and (5) positive cultural identity. Racially diverse staff at partner organizations, significantly more reflective of the student population, are the providers. This investment was moved to our general fund due to SIA reductions, but our RESJ partnerships help us build systems to support future SIA investments.

Increased academic supports and targeted interventions for our most vulnerable and historically underserved students

Using SIA funding we prioritized additional specialists at our CSI and TSI schools to provide critical supports throughout CDL. The work of our specialists at CSI and TSI schools includes small group instruction for acceleration, outreach for disengaged students, as well as supporting teachers in the ongoing planning.

2. Who is contributing to the changes you are noticing over this reporting period (in whole or part, directly or indirectly, intentionally or even unexpectedly)?

The SIA investments are integrated into system-wide efforts with a broad and deep reach. While we don't have an exhaustive list of all those contributing to the changes, the following provides a representation of those engaged during our planning and implementation:

- **The Superintendent Leadership Team** was engaged in ongoing reviews, decision making, and evaluation of resource allocation in alignment with the district’s strategic planning process.
- **Human Resource Staff** have been developing an applicant screening process to ensure we have healthy and diverse pools of candidates and screening processes that reflect our RESJ lens. This screening process has included engagement with and feedback from hiring managers and other staff outside of HR.
- **Administrators from Community-based Education Agencies (CBOs) and Multiple Pathways to Graduation (MPG)** met with school partners twice monthly to address distance learning and create a collaborative environment for future planning. MPG leadership continues to support planning for the alternative education system including student needs and academic engagement.
- **Many others** have contributed to the goal of expanding social-emotional support options, especially for Black and Native students across the district, including:
 - New FTE for social workers, counselors, and qualified mental-health professionals (QMHP);
 - Contracted culturally specific providers, including one with a focus on Native youth and another with a focus on Black youth; and
 - Wellness groups in partnership with Desiree/Coalition of Black Men/Brown Girl Rise, and extra hours for PPS staff focusing on Black and Native district-wide wellness groups.
- **Our building leaders, central office administrators, and MTSS staff** have been actively building foundational capacity and momentum towards strategic planning for systemwide social and emotional learning and development supports.
- **The PPS School Board and Superintendent** have provided the time and space for these trainings and continue to communicate the importance of SEL in our classrooms.

3. What’s the significance of the changes you are noticing?

District leaders and staff are working in partnership with our RESJ partners, principals, and educators to co-construct evidence of the change resulting from the SIA investment priorities described above. We are strengthening relational trust across these stakeholder groups, building a shared understanding of the potential and value of these investments for our racially/ ethnically and linguistically diverse students and families. It is through these growing collaborations that we are beginning to see evidence in our progress markers. Specifically, we are seeing progress in expanding and improving our systems of support in these areas:

- We see evidence of employees developing and sustaining more intentionality around hiring practices that will increase the racial/ ethnic and linguistic diversity of our applicant pools, as well as establish racially affirming and culturally sustaining conditions for our diverse workforce.
- We see evidence of district staff and leadership establishing a district-wide SEL implementation plan to provide more equitable outcomes for our students. Specifically, our SEL implementation plan reflects the PPS Vision to focus on students and reduce the harm that our Black, Indigenous, and Latinx students experience when SEL and/or trauma-informed care is used to "fix" students and their experiences in schools. Specific progress through SIA has been made in the following areas:
 - Continued MTSS implementation and coaching to schools, including school climate, PLCs, and effective classroom practices using the RESJ lens.
 - Restorative Justice specialists supporting schools with community circles, culturally responsive classrooms, and restorative practices. SEL is instrumental in the foundation work for these teams.

While we are making progress on expanding and improving our systems of support, measuring the progress in key areas during CDL has been difficult. The social, emotional, and mental health data (e.g., suicide screenings, referrals to mental health partners, threat assessment) only provide a partial picture of the impact on our students’ mental health. Due to lack of access and organic opportunities for connection that have resulted from distance learning, all of the key indicators are significantly below what we typically see at this time of year. That said, we are working in concert with our community partners and community engagement experts at the district to facilitate racially and culturally affirming focus groups across our diverse languages to capture the experiences of our families and the impact of the pandemic.

These data, as well as other partnered surveys, tell us that our students continue to struggle with anxiety and depression in distance learning. While we have enhanced the personnel and programming available, specifically to Black, Indigenous, and Latinx students, the significance of that impact is yet to be fully captured. We will continue to monitor this as students slowly return to on-site instruction.

We will have emerging data this spring from both qualitative and quantitative sources. We are partnering with our RESJ partners to collect a tapestry of stories from our students about their experiences in school and learning this year. These qualitative data will be woven together with the other district collected data we will have, as well (e.g. graduation rates, postsecondary predictors). We are also continuing the administration of our Successful School Survey this winter, which includes measures of school climate, culture, sense of belonging, relationships with peers, teachers, and families from students, families, staff, and school-based leaders. These data will provide us with critical information about the impact of our SIA investments, as well as additional summaries of our student and family experiences in comprehensive distance learning.

4. What lessons have you learned and/or any success stories (celebrations) have you had so far that are important to share with other educators across the state, for legislators to know, or for ODE to understand?

The PPS Vision, PPS Strategic Plan, and RESJ Lens together have provided a strong foundation from which to make difficult decisions in the complex and rapidly evolving COVID-19 environment. The system shifts, strategies, and racial-equity decision-making tool were our anchors in the initial SIA planning process, grounding us in our approach to navigate changes and target resources that addressed immediate challenges while continuing to build and improve enduring district-wide systems and collective efficacy.

Other successes and key learnings include:

- The increase of culturally diverse and responsive student supports in the form of counselors, social workers, Qualified Mental Health Providers, and mental health partnerships to BIPOC students in our district.
- The value of collaboration between our department leaders and Human Resources during the hiring process to fill critical positions, prioritizing the recruitment and hiring of candidates of color, and engaged in a placement process that was based on matching candidate strengths to the specific needs of school communities.
- Providing coaching support and leadership for our comprehensive School Social Worker Program. We have provided sustained professional development, technical assistance, and monthly cohort meetings for counselors, social workers, and school psychologists/QMHP's.
- Through our CASEL partnership, we have improved our capacity and focus on building common definitions, working knowledge, and practices for SEL.