

The Cottonwood School SIA Plan

Part One: General Information

This preview of the SIA application is created for information purposes only. It shares the content of what applicants will be asked to submit through an application portal. It may be revised slightly for clarity, logistical, use-ability, or formatting purposes. It is provided here only as a tool to plan and prepare.

Charter School Name: The Cottonwood School

Institution ID: 4604

Webpage (where SIA Plan will be posted): <https://www.thecottonwoodschool.org/current-families/>

Contact Person

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Part Two: Narrative Plan Summary

Plan Summary

Your plan summary will help reviewers get quick context for your plan and the work ahead. In the coming months this may also be used by your district to quickly explain your investments to community, local legislators, media, and other partners. Please write 3-6 paragraphs and provide the following information:

- A brief description of your school district eligible charter school (enrollment, demographics, strengths, challenges, etc.).
- The exact need(s) or issue(s) SIA funding will address as outlined in your 3 year plan and as it relates to the two purposes stated in the law (meeting students' mental and behavioral health needs and reducing disparities and increasing academic achievement).

The Cottonwood School is located in South Portland. We opened our doors in 2007 as the only place-based school in Portland. Over the years we have gained national and international respect as a leader in the place-based education community. Our mission is to provide a creative learning environment where students develop a deep sense of place and belonging and work to become engaged stewards of the natural world around them and active citizens within our community. Historically we have struggled to attract and enroll diverse students and staff who reflect the students we do enroll. The board and staff have raised these concerns over the years and the school has responded by investing in equity training, intentionally recruiting staff of color, developing a weighted lottery, and connecting and strengthening our current BIPOC community. While we continue to enroll a high percentage of white students, we have seen a slight and steady increase in the percent of students who are of color, 2011/12: 14.4% & 2018/19: 23.0%.

We've worked with equity coaches for multiple years to help support instructional practice and system change. Leadership is committed to creating an inclusive and supportive school where all students thrive and feel a sense of belonging.

Demographic Data for The Cottonwood School:

- American Indian/ Alaskan Native - 0%
- Asian - 3%
- Black African American 2%
- Hispanic - 9%
- Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander - 0%
- Two or More - 8%
- White -77%

From the 2018/19 Oregon State school report card:

24% of students receive free/reduced lunch

21% students with disabilities

60% of students met state grade level language arts expectations

40% of students met State grade level math expectations

Cottonwood serves students who struggle as well as those who exceed grade level. We have students who have never experienced difficulty in school and students who are considered at risk. We offer a place-based curriculum that allows our students to get out from behind their desks and out into the real world. Our students leave Cottonwood knowing how to problem solve with their peers and within the larger community, they can advocate for themselves and others, name native plants and animals, know our parks and can navigate our city. We have a consistent SpEd team through PPS that stays with our school year after year, building strong relationships with faculty, students and families. We are a school that is focused on positive relationships with students, staff and community. Our school size of 210 students is a strength that allows all staff to know most students by name. We have an active DEI committee composed of parents, board members and staff. We are in year 3 of a Grey Family Foundation grant that supports us to infuse indigenous perspective into our lessons, school day and how we perceive things. We have an indigenous advisory council that meets with us monthly to support this work.

Our challenges include lack of funding to support a school counselor, nutrition services, community events and materials, and support staff. Additionally we take on a high number of students that need support and care in managing self regulation due to mental or behavioral disorders.

We are excited to receive SIA funds to support building a community where students and families feel a sense of belonging, where all voices are heard and care is at the forefront.

Our 3-year plan is designed to address students' mental and behavioral health, and create a stronger school wide community where all students feel a sense of belonging. SIA funding will provide a part-time school counselor, a youth diversity advocate, materials and funding for celebration of heritage months and in general support for building a place where all families and students feel they belong.

Part Three: Community Engagement and Input

Overview of Community Engagement

Describe your approach to community engagement. (250 words or less). Ensure your response includes:

- Who you engaged
- Frequency / occurrence
- How you ensured engagement of staff and each of the focal student groups and their families
- Key information you collected
- Who you partnered with in the engagement efforts

Annually we engaged our [families](#) and [students](#) using a school climate survey. We offer families plenty of time and reminders and give students the opportunity to complete the survey during the school day. We also receive feedback from the board, students, teachers and self selected parents during our annual ODE/Charter School compliance site visit. We held planning meetings with our leadership team to build the plan. We also met with teachers and assistants to review the plan during our weekly staff meetings. This year our DEI committee created an [exit survey](#) for exiting families to understand why people leave when they do, what we got right and what might have gone wrong. We also held a [BIPOC Focus Group](#) to help us to better understand where and how we are succeeding and what we need to do better.

Staff - At staff meetings, staff reviewed goals and priorities:

- 1) Retain new school counselor
- 2) The need for a diversity advocate
- 3) The desire and benefit of celebrating identity and heritage
- 4) Increase support for remedial reading(K-3) & math(4-8th) skills
- 5) A lunch program

Families- We surveyed all of our families, 47% responded.

Students - We surveyed all of our 204 students 76% responded. Class time and aide support was provided.

The priorities are mental health and wellbeing - keeping our school counselor, hiring a youth diversity advocate, and creating lessons and celebration around heritage and identity.

Self-Assessment of Community Engagement

If the goal is meaningful, authentic and ongoing community engagement, where are you in that process? What barriers, if any, were experienced and how might you anticipate and resolve those issues in future engagement efforts? (500 words or less)

Our engagement with multiple stakeholders is continually improving. This year we improved our outreach to focal student families with direct outreach to our BIPOC families and students with IEPs. We also used a greater variety of activities to get input: survey, personal contacts, interviews, Zoom Q&As and listening sessions. We need to continue to disaggregate student and family responses in new and informative ways to fine tune our practices.

A barrier this past year was COVID limiting opportunities with families and community partners to virtual only. CSCS used a variety of methods to garner information but we are looking forward to offering opportunities for feedback earlier in the school year and creating more opportunities for more targeted engagement. Given the situation we were pleased with the engagement that we received.

Last, expanding our SIA planning team to include students and parents will be helpful.

What relationships and/or partnerships will you cultivate to improve future engagement? (150 words or less)

The creation of our DEI committee and a small group of BIPOC parents, along with our DEI consultant, has helped us to find ways to more deeply connect to our BIPOC community. We are in the process of holding listening sessions, creating BIPOC family events, and being more intentional in direct outreach with our BIPOC families.

Over the next year, we would like to add and deepen other focal group work as we are doing with our BIPOC focal group. Other groups to do so with will be; students and families of students with IEPs and 504s, LGBTQ+, ELL, FRL.

In order to create a more inclusive SIA planning team, CSCS will reach out to families and students to encourage joining an advisory group that meets biannually. This will ensure voices of students, staff and families are heard and are part of the decision making process.

What resources would enhance your engagement efforts? How can ODE support your continuous improvement? (150 words or less)

BIPOC consultants and funding for gatherings would support these efforts. Further, we really struggle with hiring teachers of color and would look to ODE for any support or resources on best practices or programs for this.

Who was Engaged?

Select all of the community members / groups you engaged for this process:

- Students of color
- Students with disabilities
- Students who are emerging bilinguals
- Students navigating poverty, homelessness, and foster care
- Families of students of color
- Families of students with disabilities
- Families of students who are emerging bilinguals
- Families of students navigating poverty, homelessness, and foster care
- Licensed staff (administrators, teachers, counselors, etc.)
- Classified staff (paraprofessionals, bus drivers, office support, etc.)
- Community Based Organizations (non-profit organizations, civil rights organizations, community service groups, culturally specific organizations, etc.)
- Tribal members (adults and youth)
- School volunteers (school board members, budget committee members, PTA/PTO members, booster club members, parent advisory group members, classroom volunteers, etc.)
- Business community
- Community leaders
- Other _____

How did you engage your community?

Select all of the strategies / activities you deployed to engage your community:

- Survey(s) or other engagement applications (i.e. Thought Exchange)
- In-person forum(s)

- Focus group(s)
- Roundtable discussion
- Community group meeting
- Website
- Email messages
- Newsletters
- Social media
- School board meeting
- Partnering with unions
- Partnering with community based partners
- Partnering with faith based organizations
- Partnering with business
- Other _____

Evidence of Engagement

[Let's Talk, Cottonwood Social Justice Mixer and survey](#)

[Let's Talk #2, Talking to your kids about race](#)

[Cottonwood Reads 2020, Braiding Sweetgrass and Student Event](#)

[Gather Screening and Student Focus Group](#)

[BIPOC Focus Group](#)

[Cottonwood Reads 2021, Indian No More](#)

[End of Year Family Survey](#)

[End of Year Student Survey](#)

Tell us why you selected the artifacts you did. How do they show evidence of engaging focal student populations, their families and the community? (250 words)

The artifacts represent an overarching view of the work we have done to bring families together, create a sense of belonging, and identify next steps and needs. These events have connected our staff, students and families in very concrete ways over the past school year while remote. The work has offered multiple entrance points: surveys, listening groups, hang-outs and book groups

Strategies and Activities for Engaging Focal Student Populations and their Families

Describe the **strategies** (at least two) that you executed to engage each of the focal student groups and their families present within your district and community. Your response should include why the strategies were used. (500 words).

1) Existing Networks

End of Year Family and Student Surveys have been done for years. We felt that using existing networks such as our current communication systems and a familiar survey style would help ease the burden of another survey to complete.

2) Finding New Activities

We are living in a time when surveys are needed regularly to plan and pivot to understand and lead. We worried about survey fatigue and therefore found new ways to communicate and reach out by adding Zoom Q&As, listening groups, small focal groups and one-on-one phone calls.

3) Capture Student Input at School

Our strategy for student surveys was to gather the input while at school. This has always been effective. We provided class time for all students to complete the surveys. As we feel that every voice is important, we provided one-on-one support for students in our lower grades to complete the surveys.

Describe the **activities** (at least two) that you executed to engage each of the focal student groups and their families present within your district and community. Your response should include why the activities were used. (500 words)

End of Year Surveys

Our end of the year surveys have been in place since the school's inception and historically have had high participation from families and students. This tool will be vital in guiding us and informing us of our growth.

BIPOC Focal Group

This event was the first time we have pulled our BIPOC community as a whole together into one "room" to meet one another and share and listen to the Cottonwood experience and brainstorm what more could be done. It was well received and we are excited to begin offering regular meetups that will encourage more participation and guide us in supporting and growing this vital part of our community.

Annual ODE/Charter School Compliance Site Visit

This activity complimented the survey and helped us to better understand our strengths and weaknesses and determine what focal groups we needed to hear more from and what strategies have been working.

Strategies and Activities for Engaging Staff

Describe the **strategies** (at least two) that you executed to engage staff. Your response should include why the strategies were used. (500 words) Please note: your strategies for staff may be the same or different for the focal engagement with student populations and their families.

The Cottonwood teaching staff engages in data review sessions throughout the year. We use this strategy to effectively engage teachers in understanding the specific learning needs of individual students and groups of students. During the 2020/21 school year we reviewed data in grade level teams and whole staff under the leadership of our academic director and our equity coach. This was the first year that we merged our equity work with student outcomes and created goals based on these new understandings.

Our new school counselor engaged staff weekly in mindfulness activities at our staff meetings. Creating the opportunity for our staff to engage and improve their mindfulness practice in order to be there for and better understand the process for their students.

Describe the **activities** (at least two) that you employed to engage staff. Your response should include why the strategies were used. (500 words) Please note: your activities for staff may be the same or different for the focal engagement with student populations and their families.

Our staff has been encouraged and invited to all activities. We ask that they attend at least 2 a year, most teachers attend more. All staff attend weekly staff meetings and respond to surveys. Therefore, surveys and weekly staff meetings have been the tools most commonly used with our staff. **Surveys** allow us to get to the heart of things and allow some anonymity and **staff meetings** allow for direct teaching and sharing, small group work, goal setting and reflection.

Collecting and Using Input

Describe and distill what you learned from your community and staff. Ensure your response includes (250-500 words):

- What you learned or are actively learning
- How you applied the input to inform your planning

Our staff priorities include maintaining a school counselor, creating a sense of belonging for all students, a focus on culturally relevant teaching practices and increasing math interest and math scores.

Family priorities were maintaining mental health support through a school counselor, creating a sense of belonging for all students and school wide celebration of identity and student heritage

Through this work we have identified a need for a Diversity Advocate at The Cottonwood School. A Diversity Advocate will play an important role in the Charter's diversity initiatives among the students from grades K-8th grade. They would work closely with the academic faculty and the DEI committee in regards to the needs of our students of color whether that is academically or socially. They would host student-led affinity groups among students of color to have a safe space to address issues or to just hang out with peers like themselves. They would also work with parents, giving them a safe place to discuss the needs of their students navigating our predominantly white space. We have added this position to our 3 year SIA plan.

We are working with our equity coach, academic director, and math specialist to create a more culturally responsive math program that connects the learning more concretely to the real world and our place-based projects. We have brought into action our Cottonwood Reads program, engaging our whole school in thoughtful literature and discussions across all ages.

Our surveys and listening sessions have reinforced that we weave diverse perspectives into much of our school day everyday, but our BIPOC community has wanted us to focus on Heritage Months as well to isolate and dig deep each month into a historically underserved group. This is additionally done in the classrooms through meetings, literature, read alouds, all school meetings, performances and recognition.

We will be implementing an annual multicultural family celebration.

Part Four: Data Analysis

Data Sources

Describe the data sources used and how the data informs equity-based decision-making. (150 words or less)

The following data source were utilized

- Cottonwood Historical Demographic Data
- Data from 2018/19 Oregon State Report Card
- Data from EasyCBM Assessments
- Data From Parent and Student Surveys
- Feedback from Parent Meetings & Gatherings

During staff meetings, individual student academic and personal growth data is discussed and supports are identified that help ensure that each

student is making progress towards their goals.

Part Five: SIA Plan

Your SIA plan must be for three years. It should name outcomes, priorities, strategies and activities that you believe will cause changes to occur and meet the two primary purposes of the SIA fund. It also should reflect the choices you made after pulling all the input and planning pieces together for consideration. Your SIA Plan serves as an essential snapshot of your expected use of SIA funds.

Key Elements of Your SIA Plan: Outcomes, Strategies, Activities and Priorities

The SIA Plan itself includes the following elements and the suggested questions are offered as a guide to support your planning:

- **Outcomes** are the changes you're trying to cause.
- **Strategies** inform long-term goals, have a theory of action or impact, and consider resources, context, people and timelines.
- **Activities** are much more concrete and are oriented to smaller steps or shorter-time frames within the arc of a given strategy or set of strategies. Activities generally have specific resource allocations and might also be called "initiatives," "tactics," "investments" or "work plans."
- **Priorities** identify an order or level of focus for different strategies and activities. Where a district or school might have several desired strategies and activities to advance those strategies, priorities signal what will be focused on amidst time and resource availability.

Outcomes

Your SIA plan will likely have multiple outcomes. Outcomes can be described as the changes you are trying to cause. They might be changes in student achievement and growth; changes in policy and practice; changes in student participation and access to programs and courses; changes in adult behavior, practices or beliefs; etc.

- What changes do you hope will happen over the next three years by executing your SIA plan?
- Are you having the impact you were hoping for on the people or groups you are engaged or partnering with?
- What are you seeing and learning?
- What would you like to see happening?

Over the next three years, we hope to see an improvement in students reporting a sense of belonging, identity, and safety at school. The additional staff funded by last year's SIA grant, have been well received by students, families and staff. Parents report that not only do their student(s) feel supported by our school counselor, but the whole family does. Also, teachers feel like they have support and answers when students' behaviors and feelings feel overwhelming. Therefore, we anticipate students will show improved classroom behavior, have an increased ability to manage stress and depression and have better attitudes about themselves. We imagine the end result will be that students'

academic performance will also improve. The data supports mental health services to continue.

Strategies

Your SIA plan may focus on multiple (more than one) strategies over a 1-3 year period. Strategies are the plans designed to achieve and reach your intended outcome(s).

- What means (strategies) will be used to create change in your district or eligible charter school?
- What spending priorities have you decided to focus on for the next three years?
- What evidence or theory of action have you considered that indicates this strategy will bring about the changes you are targeting?

If we provide a school counselor, THEN students will have access to qualified mental health support and resiliency skill building skills AND will therefore show improved classroom behavior, have an increased ability to manage stress, anxiety and depression and have better attitudes about themselves, others and school.

If we hire a Youth Diversity Advocate THEN our students of color will be supported in navigating our predominantly white space and find connection and belonging.

If we invest in heritage books, curriculum, professional development and fund family heritage celebrations, THEN the school will have a stronger culture of inclusivity and community, and individuals will have an understanding of one another's heritage creating connection and belonging.

If we invest in our students' sense of belonging and identity, THEN students' academic performance will improve.

Activities

Your SIA plan outlines specific actions, activities and investments. For purposes of efficiency and review this will be considered your budget narrative.

- What activities and investments are you planning to make to advance your priorities?
- What are the focused ways you plan to utilize the SIA investment (and possibly other braided funds) to reach your identified outcomes?
- Who is responsible for implementing the activities and investments?
- What are the timelines for changes in strategy?
- What is your model for continuous evaluation of the return on investment or impact of this investment?
- How are the resource allocations in your budget reflective of the changes your planning is intended to cause?

Our top priority is to provide for the mental well being and safety of our students and staff. Our primary activity is to rehire our school counselor and

move her from part time to full. To support this work we will braid ESSER and our CIP funds to continue having a school counselor.

The second priority is to hire a diversity advocate. This will add staff capacity and help to create a warm school culture where every student belongs.

The third is to build capacity and resources to learn about and celebrate each individual and their heritage.

We will do this by:

- 1) Continuing to hire our school counselor and moving the position to full time.
- 2) Hiring a diversity advocate.
- 3) Fund student and family heritage events.
- 4) Purchase and support regular SEL PD

We will continue to use our parent, student and an additional staff surveys, listening sessions with focal groups and our annual ODE review to guide us, gain insight on the investment activities and form possible new activities.

Priorities

In order to support tiered planning for SIA funds, please share what you think we need to understand about your priorities for the first three years. Consider the following questions:

- Where do you expect to put most of your focus, resources, and energy in the first year?
- Using “High/Medium/Low” or “A/B/C” please provide a narrative description of your priorities over the first three years. ● In what ways might your priorities shift within a given year based on resource availability (including human resources or skilled consultant supports you are planning for)?

- A. Hire a part-time school counselor.
- B. Buy tools and furniture to create a warm and welcoming school environment.
- C. Purchase SEL curriculum and tools.

Budget

★ [SIA Budget Template](#)

Equity Lens or Tool

★ Upload the equity lens or tool you used to inform and/or clarify your plan.

Describe how you used the uploaded equity lens or tool. (250 words or less)

School leaders applied the [Oregon Equity Lens](#) throughout the planning process.

The primary focus of the equity lens is on race and ethnicity, While there continues to be a deep commitment to may other areas, we know that a focus on race by everyone connected to The Cottonwood School allows direct improvements in other areas, We are committed to explicitly identifying disparities in our schools educational outcomes for the purpose of intervention and investment.

From the beginning we gathered input from students, families and staff, including students and family focal groups. From this we learned that our priorities have remained the same over time: support student mental health, celebrate heritage and identity, and create a warm and welcoming community that fosters a sense of belonging. Our planning team applied the Equity Lens to these goals wanting to ensure that all students would have access to a school culture of safety and respect for all students and adults that supports the social, emotional and physical well being of students and adults, that is critical to academic and professional success

Draft Longitudinal Performance Growth Targets

[Please reference [Section Four of the SIA Guidance](#) for more information.]

Part Six: Use of Funds

Allowable Uses

Which of the following allowable use categories is your plan designed to fund within? Select any or all.

- Increasing instructional time
- Addressing students' health and safety needs
- Evidence-based strategies for reducing class size and caseloads

❑ Expanding availability of and student participation in well-rounded learning experiences

Describe how you will utilize SIA funds to meet students' mental health needs, increase academic achievement and reduce academic disparities for the focal student groups called out in the law. (500 words or less)

The Cottonwood School is committed to improving students' mental and behavioral needs, increasing academic achievement and reducing academic disparities through the SIA investments. The mental and behavioral needs of students will be directly addressed by hiring a school counselor, academic support and youth advocate. A significant portion of the SIA funds will be used to increase academic achievement and reduce academic disparities. Studies show that the increase in social emotional support given by highly qualified staff improves the social emotional and mental and behavioral health of students.

Describe the potential academic impact for all students AND the focal student groups based on your use of funds in your plan. (500 words or less)

The Cottonwood School is committed to creating a safe and culturally responsive environment for all students including for black, brown and underserved students. Our plan supports targeted universalism, meaning that all students can benefit while focus can be given to target or focal groups. Studies have shown that increased academic support and target interventions for our most vulnerable and historically underserved students are highly effective in increasing academic achievement.

What barriers, risks or choices are being made that could impact the potential for focal students to meet the longitudinal growth targets you've drafted, or otherwise experience the supports or changes you hope your plan causes? (250 words or less)

The setback from the Pandemic and loss of inperson school and events may hinder the growth trajectory, but I see us quickly regaining our ground due to layers of support and resources we have put into place.

Part Seven: Documentation and Board Approval

Evidence of Board Approval

Approved at our October 2021 Board Meeting, minutes posted [HERE](#). The final plan is posted [HERE](#).