



## Director's Report September 2015

### CAPS Program Updates:

All programs are up and running and we had a relatively smooth start to the New Year. Many changes took place over the summer. You will remember that CAPS spent some time the end of last school year looking at possible spaces for expansion of the Gateway Program. After a careful search and a lucky break we were able to secure a new space in Sonoma Square. The new space houses our Gateway High School programs. With the move we are able to spread out a bit more down stairs and separate out the Elementary programs from the Middle School. This new space not only allows for better programming for our existing classes but also allows for expansion at all levels. Last year our limited space was the cause of several declines for student referrals.

Our Satellite programs have also had some growing pains over the summer. Due to student population as well as DESE recommendation we have divided out several programs and moved one program. At Hubbardston Elementary School our Kelly Day program expanded by one classroom and students were redistributed to better meet age span requirements. At Mahar we also expanded programs to better match student needs and age spans. A teacher change has happened in our Kelly Day High School Program at Oakmont as well. Winchendon Public Schools will be hosting our two Horizon Programs, one in the Toy Town Elementary building and one at the Murdock Middle School. In addition, Winchendon will continue to house our older Deaf and Hard of Hearing students at the Middle and High School. The Deaf and Hard of Hearing program for our younger students in Leominster was identified in our CPR as not being accessible. We were already planning a program move for Kindergarten students to Westminster and found the opportunity to move both preschool and kindergarten to the Meeting House School.

In addition to program moves, we have also moved staff around in many classroom to best meet the students' needs and the teaching expertise. Despite all the change the staff have been very cooperative and enthusiastic about the start to our new school year. Our opening day All Staff meeting was held at Wachusett Village Inn. It was a great opportunity for the staff to get to know me a bit better and a chance for me to set a tone for the school year. We spent some time looking at all the great things we do here at CAPS Collaborative and then spent some time reviewing areas for change. I have planned a continued discussion and activity around the areas staff identified for change and look forward to working with the staff to create plans to address identified change.

CAPS continues to see an increase in student placement and referrals. Included in your packet is a report on our current student count by district and program. We are currently starting with 101

students. This is the current number reflective of summer transitions and moves. In addition, we have three recent referrals with profiles that appear to be good matches to our programs. I am planning a marketing package that will be sent out to area special education directors describing our programs, locations, and expansions.

Update on the Coordinated Program Review. This summer we were given our findings related to the Coordinated Program Review from DESE. This being our first CPR I feel very good about the overall results. The areas identified were not a big surprise. Dr. McCaul and the program staff worked very hard to bring many things into compliance. The overall report shows the efforts of their work. The first few weeks in my new position here I spent working on the corrective action plan to address identified areas. Areas of concern focused mostly on compliance around IEP's, accessibility, several policies, practice with ELL students and supports, translation of materials, licensure and age spans. Many areas have been addressed with staff changes and program expansion and moves. The Corrective Action Plan has been submitted and we are waiting for its approval and the timeline for monitoring plan submissions. We will have one year to bring everything into compliance.

New Staff have been interviewed and brought on board pending your approval. We have been able to bring on highly qualified staff with appropriate licensure for their positions. Some staff were brought on to address opening from resignations or retirements. Other staff were brought on to fill new positions open due to program expansion, program moves and new students. I am very pleased with the new hires and feel they will bring stability and experience to our programs. Resumes are available for your review.

Program Needs: The move to Sonoma Square has been a big boost to our overall programming in our Gateways Programs. The building not only meets programmatic needs it has a real curb appeal that School Street really lacked. To be competitive we really needed to look at our building and how we compare with the competition out there. That said our next need is to have a better outdoor space for our students, young and old. We would like to propose a plan to install a new playground structure as well as a more permanent basketball court. We have reviewed several plans and are working closely with our landlord to map out a space and plan that would meet our needs. The landlord is interested in expanding our parking, and creating a better parking area for our busses as well. Working with the finance subcommittee we are hoping to use some capital funds to complete this project. We feel comfortable to say that the whole project could be completed for less than \$50,000.

Budget: I have been working very closely with Justin to review and understand the budget process. Working with a budget that I did not create has a learning curve. I come from a very conservative budgeting background. The CAPS budget needs to be approached with a very conservative view based on its vulnerability. I have been involved in reviewing all purchase and expense thus far and will continue to review the finances very closely. Our current enrollment has brought our budget into a more solid stand however student population in our programs can fluctuate rapidly creating need to keep a close watch on finances.

Overall I feel that my first month here as CAPS Executive Director has been a positive one. I feel that this has been a great move for me and that my skill set is a good match to the position. Overall I have established a good rapport with the staff and have been strategic in working with the staff to quiet some staff concerns. We have received a letter from the MTA that several staff have inquired about the possibility of unionizing. I have always worked with a union and have no concerns about that however I will continue to work with staff to address concerns and questions and we will see where this all goes. Overall we are off to great start, the staff are a talented and dedicated group, the students are just wonderful and I look forward to working closely with the Board. I am committed to making CAPS the best program it can be and I am excited about the potential that we have to continue to expand and grow. Thank you for this opportunity.

Respectfully submitted By: Cindy Landanno September 9, 2015