

CAPS Collaborative

Director's Report

October 19, 2016

Behavior Specialist Position: I am pleased to announce that we have filled the recently posted position of Behavior Specialist for the Gateway programs. The unique needs and complicated profiles of the Gateway student population makes this position essential to supporting student success. Tiffany Hermans joined our Gateway Team in early October and brings with her a background of skill to work with this student population. I am very pleased with the addition of this position and I feel it will support and move our programs along a continuum of success.

DESE Program Approval: Annually CAPS Collaborative applies for program approval for our day programs with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. This application includes documentation about our Gateway programs, staff qualifications, assurances of compliance, inspection certification as well as any updated policies. This document package was submitted to the DESE in late September to meet the October 1st deadline. Through this process we had the program space inspected by the Building Commissioner, Board of Health Agent and the Fire Department. All inspections were positive and we were cleared for all required permits.

DESE Fiscal Audit: The Auditors were here the week of September 26th and spent the week reviewing our fiscal information in detail. At our exit interview they reported few if any areas of non-compliance and were very complimentary about how we are handling fiscal responsibility, Justin's documentation and systems for tracking. They did note that our Treasurer needs to be Bonded and we will move quickly to meet this requirement. A formal report will be sent in the next few weeks and will be presented at a future Board meeting.

Staff Pay Scales: Several staff have come to me with a concern around the staff pay scales and some inequities imbedded in the scales that we use. We currently have three para professional scales. (teacher assistant, educational para and licensed para) The licensed para is clearly defined as used to pay staff who have certifications or licensure but are not teachers. COTA, SLPA, ABA certifications are some examples of staff paid on this scale. It becomes fuzzier when you look at the other two scales. Teaching assistant and Ed Para seem to have been used interchangeable over time with no clear delineation. Since I have been here I have been trying to bring staff on based on their experience and

background and have often used the Ed para scale. The problem is that several of our new entry level staff are now being paid more than some of our veteran staff who have worked here for 20 plus years. When you look at the job requirements these people are doing the same job responsibilities. That said it is easy to see why staff would be a bit disgruntled. While I don't have an easy answer to how to solve this discrepancy, I have looked at several possible scenarios. I would request that when the Finance Subcommittee meets in November to review the draft annual audit report, they also consider the pay scale question.

Professional Development Opportunities: The Fall has already started with a flurry of CAPS sponsored professional development activities. In house, we have created a trade of PD services with the Groton Public Schools. Jen Gates met a presenter at a Leadership Training she attended this summer and was very interested in bringing the trainer's knowledge of UDL work to our staff. When we approached the trainer the price was a bit out of budget range. Through some careful negotiations, we were able to create a tradeoff of trainings. The Groton Public Schools will send their presenter to CAPS for two full day training sessions on implementation of UDL, while we will send one of our staff plus a FLLAC staff person to their district to provide training in Mental Health First Aid. FLLAC will also send people to our UDL Training. This is such a win win proposal for all of the programs and we are excited to explore more options in the future similar to this.

In another partnership, CAPS and FLACC host a monthly Special Education Director Forum. This meeting is designed to provide PD for the Directors as well as networking opportunities. At our September meeting we created a list of possible topics and presenters. One of our next meetings will involve a visit from the DESE Homeless department providing and overview of new regulations. Special Education Directors are standalone positions in each district and this type of meeting is a very valuable time to networking and staying on top of new regulations and requirements. We are also working with several Special Education Directors to host a number of job alike forums during the year. So far we meet with Special Education Team Chairs from the area districts and have plans for a like group meeting with the regional School Psychologists.

On a similar note CAPS will host quarterly Regional Parent Advisory Council Meetings following the Director's meetings. This group was started last year and its interest has grown. These meeting don't take the place of district PAC meetings but were designed to help with the providing of common trainings that all PACs are required to offer.

CAPS will also host a training for districts on the use of the Guidelines for Inclusive Practice with DESE and DSAC staff. The date and time has not yet been set but I will forward you information as the plan becomes more solid.

As we have added new staff to our teaching team we now have an increased need for trained mentors. I was trained in the past to provide mentor training and would like to offer this training to districts if there is an interest. One way or the other I will be setting up a training for my staff with the hope of getting a core group of people trained to be mentors for our new staff.

Annual Report: I have started the process of putting together the DESE required Collaborative Annual Report. This report will be a review of any changes to programs and services that happened last year. This report will be compiled over the next month and brought to you for a Board vote at our December meeting to meet the January 1, 2017 deadline. Copies will be provided for you to bring back to your districts as well.

School Committee Presentations: I would like to offer to attend a school committee meeting for your district sometime this school year. Last year I had the opportunity to attend several School Committee meetings and I really enjoyed giving the districts an update on CAPs programs and information about our partnerships with districts. Please let me know if you would like to schedule a time for this type of presentation.

Respectfully Submitted:

Cindy Landanno
Executive Director
CAPS Collaborative