

CAPS Collaborative

Director's Report

February 8, 2017

DESE Reports: I am pleased to report that DESE has returned our Annual Report and Annual Audit with no findings and has accepted the report in full. In addition, both Gateway Middle/High School and Gateway Elementary DESE Program Approvals, which are submitted annually, have also been approved.

Program Updates: All CAPS programs continue to flourish. Student census is at an all-time high and each program has focused on improving instruction and quality. This year's budget and our increased student enrollment, has allowed us to bring in some new curriculum materials, update program equipment and increase the use of technology in the classrooms. Teachers have also been given a small budget of their own to purchase classroom supplies. They are extremely appreciative as it helps to defray some of the out of pocket spending that all teachers do.

Professional Development: This school year each program has focused on badly needed professional development designed to improve instruction. The Gateway programs have worked with a consultant to focus on UDL and have used their PD days for this work. The Satellite programs have focused on using PD time to establish better communication and understanding around students individual IEP's and service needs. The staff is working on collaboratively to create comprehensive service plans for these very complicated students.

2018 Budget Preparation Work: Myself, Justin and the program administrators have been meeting to discuss program needs, staffing patterns and ratios, expansion ideas, and program adjustments. Our preliminary budget sees a few changes to programs as well as several new staffing adjustments. The Deaf/Hard of Hearing Program in the middle/high school has been under review for two years and I feel will need to be eliminated in the 2018 budget. That said we will need to continue to support the students in the program and will work with the two districts to set up a transition program model for these students. As our program for our younger deaf and hard of hearing students continues to grow we will look at staffing needs to support this expansion. Our Links program at Mount Wachusett Community College is another program that we are reviewing during budget discussion and will re-work some of the program model to make this program more fiscally sound.

We are looking at the fiscal impact of expansion in several programs. Gateway Middle School continues to be a program with many referrals and is currently at capacity. We are exploring the possible expansion of another middle school classroom. In addition, the Hubbardston Kelly Day program has continued to grow and we are exploring a possible increase to classrooms there as well. You will

remember that I have been looking at this program for expansion since last year but was unable to find a new teacher with the appropriate severe licensure.

We are working with a plan to keep tuition increases to a minimum with potential to offer up a budget with a 0% to 1% increase. We are also working on figures that incorporate a 2 to 3 % increase for staff. Several budget options will be presented to the Finance subcommittee for review at our March subcommittee meeting. A draft budget will be presented to the whole board at our March 8, 2017 Board meeting.

Fitchburg State University: I recently spent the day touring our programs with Dr. Anne Howard from Fitchburg State University. Dr. Howard, who is the chair of the severe license program, was very interested in our programs for both practicum and student teacher placements. After our tour, she was very complimentary about our programs and has already made plans for three students to work with us this semester. I am very excited about fostering this relationship as I sure it will lead to potential teachers for our programs in the future.

All Staff Benefit Meeting: On January 30th we held an All Staff Meeting to review our new employee benefits as well as the Health Insurance update. Staff were very attentive and the meeting gave us time to go over the 401.k employer match. We invited Jen Corso and Ben Caisse to present the 401.k John Hancock materials, TD Bank reviewed a Bank at Work Plan and Barbara Burke, our insurance broker, reviewed Health Insurance, Life Insurance, Short and Long Term Disability plans and our Vision plan. February is our open enrollment time and I feel this meeting gave our employees a timely and solid overview of all of CAPS employee benefits. The employees are very appreciative of the Boards continued support.

Respectfully Submitted:

Cindy Landanno
Executive Director