

Quarterly Update
Central MA Special Education Collaborative
March 31, 2015

With the conclusion of the 2014 – 2015 school year close at hand, CMSEC is facing a number of challenging circumstances as we prepare for FY16. At the end of February, the Board of Directors accepted the resignation of Executive Director, Mary Baker and is preparing the search for her replacement. In the meantime, Ms. Baker will be working closely with newly hired Recovery High School Principal, Susan Strong to ensure a successful fall opening.

The addition of a recovery high school in Worcester County and its critical need as the community, state and nation confront the opioid epidemic cannot be understated. Our recovery high school is, first and foremost, a public school with high standard of both academic expectations and instructional practices. Its uniqueness, and what sets these schools apart from a typical public school is the fact the students with drug and alcohol addictions, who are committed to a path of recovery, can attend school in a judgement-free, supportive environment with peers who are experiencing the same challenges. Often times, students who have re-entered into their home school after undergoing treatment for their substance abuse, find themselves faced with ongoing temptations and pressures, added to the stigma associated with drug use. These challenges then typically lead to increased potential for relapse. In the recovery high school model, this is not the case, especially given the level of personal responsibility and accountability to their peers.

Recovery high schools first emerged in this country in 1987 and have grown at a steady pace since then. In a 2013 market study by the Association of Recovery High Schools, 25 schools were identified in over ten states, four of which have been established in Massachusetts, beginning in 2007. Similar to others, the goal of our recovery high school is to provide a safe and substance free educational environment that encourages a commitment to recovery within an academic and therapeutic framework promoting high standards and maximum growth potential.

The recovery high school will embrace a wraparound approach to services including family, home schools and community collaboration with ongoing case management. Student screening and admission will be determined by the recovery high school team according to specific entry criteria including a recent diagnosis of substance abuse and 30 days of sobriety. All students will sign an accountability contract encompassing a commitment to sobriety as a condition of admission and must submit to random drug screens. A comprehensive curriculum that is consistent with the MA Frameworks, meeting minimum time on learning requirements and leading to a high school diploma will be ensured, along with a plan to ensure readiness for college and/or careers.

Finance and Operations Updates

The finance subcommittee has held monthly meetings addressing programmatic and staffing needs in preparation of a sound, conservative budget for FY16. The final version is expected to be completed and presented to the Board of Directors at their May 12, 2015 meeting. FY15 real and anticipated expenses are on track.

Program Updates

The following information was submitted by each Program Director, illustrating their highlights this quarter.

1. CENTRAL MA ACADEMY

ANN ORTIZ

Administration Highlights

CMA staff along with the students have fashioned a partnership with Summer Star Wildlife Sanctuary in Boylston, Massachusetts. This is forty-five acres of natural land where both students and staff are going to learn about plants, streams, and wildlife. The Summer Star Staff has set up both instructional sessions and nature walks for students and staff free of charge. Students will also have the opportunity to help maintain the Wildlife Sanctuary.

CMA hosted a Parent Workshop for parents/guardians and students called, How to Completely Change Your Child's School Experience. Together with the Latino Educational Institute, the staff of CMA facilitated a discussion over coffee, juice, and staff made snacks topic of discussion included:

- *How to develop a better rapport between parents and school.
- *How does the school work with my son/daughter differently at CMA?
- *How to develop a personal plan for students to achieve both short and long term goals.

Twenty one parents/guardians along with their children attended the event on March 11th. CMA is extremely thankful to Hilda Ramirez and her staff for their time and dedication to our program.

Academic Highlights

Language Arts:

Students in the upper level high school English created a virtual puppet show on the "Puppet Pals" app on the class iPad. This was a modernized scene from *Our Town* that the students wrote, directed, designed, and read for independently.

Eleventh graders created slide presentations of incidents of Genocide in the 20th century after reading *Night* and watching *Hotel Rwanda*. They then shared this on the Google Drive through Google Slides.

Ninth and tenth graders completed novels and responded to long composition writing prompts utilizing the composition writing prompt and dictionaries for revisions.

Middle School Language Arts students have been working on individually chosen research projects. With staff assistance, they chose topics they were interested in so that they would do extensive research, compiling information, and writing a final research paper including visual aids. Each student focused their papers on an individually written statement of purpose.

Mathematics:

High school students have been focusing on several learning objectives such as: conversions rates of measurements, area, volume and graphing. Students have been relating these concepts while interacting with a new three dimensional printer.

Middle school students have been learning how to solve one and two step equations to better understanding how they are used in the real world. For example: How to figure out how much items cost with x amount of money, how much they should get paid at a job, and if they got charged too much for a bill. The students studied how to graph a line, find the slope and write an equation to help them get a better understanding on how data can be represented in real life.

Science:

Students in Biology I class were learning about cell biology and its importance in life. During the unit, numerous discussions were held on how cell reproduction can lead to certain mutations like cancer. Our students have a soft spot for learning about a struggle so they all chose a cancer, researched it, and presented it on a poster board. Some students had personal stories of family members who went through cancer while others had just been interested to see how cancer becomes so lethal. We also watched "The Fault in Our Stars" about two teenagers who struggled with their cancer battles. Many students expressed how they now understand that sometimes other people have it worse than them and they should be aware of that in the future.

During the winter months at CMA, students in Biology II immersed into the unit of Ecology. We went on adventures to the Galapagos Islands, the Amazon rain forest, and witnessed the untold stories of the continent we live on: North America. While diving into our studies for understanding key vocabulary and concepts, students were shown some of the best coverage from National Geographic, Discovery Channel, and BBC on different areas of the world and how organisms interact with their environments. Their teacher commented: *"I always remember that most of our students have never been outside of Worcester, so using the resources to show students what the world looks like helps them understand the content."*

The Anatomy and Physiology students focus was to learn about our maze of a nervous system and understand how our wiring actually works. The amount of medical terms and content focused vocabulary was tough but students worked through so that they could enjoy www.anatomyarcade.com and YouTube (educational videos that showed the journey of our messages - especially with the sensory organs).

7th and 8th grade students worked on learning advances in Science and Technology. Students learned the steps of the engineering process by collaborating on making a prototype of a bridge. Students were judged on the aesthetics of their structure, the ability to hold 2 lbs. of weight, and the stability of the bridge. When the bridges were presented in class many students wanted to see the max amount of weight that their bridge could hold. Two male students won the contest by creating a bridge that held 72 pounds.

History

Grade 12 students explored the 1960's, specifically the Woodstock Music Festival. In class, students tied-dyed t-shirts and wore them in class when they presented their project to their peers. Projects consisted of a written biographical essay on a musician/music group that played at Woodstock. Students also created a PowerPoint presentation of their musician/musical group. Presentations included information, pictures, sound clips, and videos.

The 9th and 11th grade students have been covering World War I in class. A focus has been on the new weapons and technology that emerged during the war. In groups, students created a realistic World War I Trench from a cardboard box and other art supplies based on a blue print that was drawn in class.

Tenth graders reviewed how the Industrial Revolution began in the United States and how it changed society and the economies in the North and the South. Students independently worked on projects of their choice from the era. Students were expected to write an informational essay on their topic and create a visual. Some topics included: interchangeable parts, the Slavery System, Robert Fulton and the first steam engine, and Samuel Slater. U.S. History, students studied the Revolutionary War, the development of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, Westward Expansion, and the differences between the Federalist and Anti-Federalists. Students worked on biographies of the first five U.S. Presidents. Students focused on where these men were born, how they grew up and what education or training they received, as well as what obstacles and important contributions they made for the United States. In World History, students studied the Great Depression and the rise of global dictators. Students read about the events that would lead to the Second World War. Students' researched new technologies and weaponry used in the War using online and video sources. Students also worked on projects that used primary sources, newspaper articles, and examined literature from around the world that gave various viewpoints of the war. Students were able to view the war from the eyes of American soldiers to Jewish Holocaust survivors.

Clinical Highlights

Our clinical staff has been working on transition planning with many of our students. Clinicians took a group of high school students to visit Porter and Chester Institute in Worcester MA where they learned about different trade programs available after high school. Clinicians also brought students interested in cosmetology to Paul Conzo's day spa to observe and ask questions related to the field of cosmetology. From these field trips one CMA senior has decided to apply to Porter and Chester to pursue a career in the automotive field. Additionally, clinicians are assisting CMA students with creating resumes, applying for summer jobs, and learning interview skills. Clinicians have also been running "Popup" incentives for good behavior. "Popup" privileges include time at the gym, hair and nails, or crocheting and arts and crafts. These incentives have proved effective in promoting positive behavior throughout the building.

Community Highlights

Students have been working on cleaning up the neighborhood! Students earn free time during the week. The time is added up and students on Friday afternoon are allowed to sign up for neighborhood areas to pick up trash, sweep and rake the sidewalks.

2. Hartwell Learning Center Jessica Pitsillides

Highlights:

- MCPHS Student Comprehensive Eye Exams (free to HLC) – Jan 20-22
- HLC 1st Annual Souper Bowl Soup Contest – Jan 23
- Magic Steve's Magic Show (Donated/Free to HLC) – Feb 25
- Read Across America Community Leaders – March 2
- HR 9 Community Shopping Trip – March 18
- St. Patrick's Day Potato Buffet & Irish Step Dancers (Free to HLC) – March 20
- Literature Fair/Author Review – March 27

Professional Development:

- Monday & Wednesday Morning Educator Meetings (8:30 – 9:10)
- MA Model Educator Evaluation System
- CPI
- PBIS Leadership, Whole Staff, Conference (March 12-13)
- Kinems Instructional Technology Demo/Training for Teachers
- Clinicians – Superflex Social Thinking Curriculum (w/ Dr. Jean & Ashley G.)
- Clinicians – Relaxation in the Workplace (at Assumption)
- Nurse Jackie to CPR/First Aid Instructor Training
- MCAS Administration Training

3. Central MA Prep Michael Kelly

Quarterly Highlights CMP January-March 2015

- We had a pizza party to celebrate the hard work and effort our students put into their MCAS tests.
- Clinical staff sent to Trichotillomania training from the BECK institute.
- We had Det. Jay Duggan of the West Boylston Police Department and the state S.W.A.T. team come in for A.L.I.C.E. training.
- Continued our partnership with the Be Like Brit Foundation.