

Quarterly Update
Central Mass Special Education Collaborative
March 31, 2014

Ongoing initiatives continued to move the Central MA Special Education Collaborative toward a stronger foundation of student learning and achievement in the third quarter of FY14. The administrative team has focused on identifying and enhancing our objectives, initiatives and program growth.

Partnerships with our member Districts have strengthened through targeted meetings between CMSEC and special education stakeholders. This has provided a platform to define program parameters consistent with the needs of students being referred. In addition, a collaborative-wide intake and referral packet has been developed to ensure consistency in the information collected and continuity for districts referring students to our programs.

A major focus over the last quarter and moving forward, is to increase our marketing opportunities to our neighboring districts in an effort to increase visibility and service delivery. As part of this marketing effort a new CMSEC website has been designed and executed (www.cmsec.org). Our new dynamic website will allow faculty and staff within CMSEC to maintain up-to-date content specific webpages to both inform and engage students, families and the community at large.

With the recent resignation of our Director of Finance and Operations, CMSEC embarked on a comprehensive search resulting in the appointment of Ms. Beverly Tefft as the new Director effective May 5, 2014. Member district representatives as well as CMSEC administrators participated in the review of applications, interviews and presentations by the candidates resulting in the recommendation of Ms. Tefft.

INSTRUCTIONAL HIGHLIGHTS:

- CMSEC has begun discussions with key staff around the piloting of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) computerized adaptive interim assessment, starting in the Fall of 2014. The MAP assessment provides immediate feedback to teachers so they can better differentiate for students, meeting their individual and diverse needs. As a start, ELA teachers have begun matching Lexile (reading) levels of novels being taught on the Nooks and shared this information with teachers across the curriculum working to improve literacy skills for all students.



- Students from various science classes have taken advantage of the spring weather to go outside and explore vernal pools, observing beginning stages of the ecological systems, as well as tracking bird migration patterns.
- As part of a health curriculum, "Fitness Friday" lessons are getting each class up and moving either within classrooms or weather permitting, outside to focus on physical activity, healthy eating habits and overall general wellness. Other lessons focused on the nervous system where students researched addiction and created a poster that highlighted important facts.
- Teaching staff introduced students to a social bookmarking website called Diigo.com to increase student homework completion percentage and performance.
- Following biology units on cell biology, students completed a project on cell division, in which they researched various types of cancers and created a visual illustrating the concepts. In other classes, students created DNA strands as visual aids for a lesson on base pairing rules, complementary pairs, base sequences, and nucleotides.
- High School students filled out career interest surveys to narrow down areas of strength and potential vocational considerations. They also practiced completing job applications and worked with clinicians to learn about appropriate application and interview etiquette.
- Students engaged in project-based learning centered on the novels To Kill a Mockingbird, House on Mango Street, and A Raisin in the Sun.
- In math class, students constructed a pitch-n-putt golf course while learning about area, perimeter, and surface area, enjoying a game after testing.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

- CMSEC faculty and administrators worked in small groups with a consultant to refine and further develop goals more closely aligned to the SMART goal framework. Revised goals more clearly define educator actions, the metric used and expected outcomes.
- All CMSEC administrators including assistant program directors completed the required educator evaluation training provided by Teachers21 led by Dr. Jerry Goldberg. The two workshops focused on observation and feedback as well as the collection of evidence, both of which are required for evaluators by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- Clinicians participated in a two-day training on Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs), and developed a data-driven FBA template based on empirical information from staff across the curriculum and school environment.
- Key staff from each middle and high school program participated in a half-day workshop on Edgenuity, an on-line credit recovery program. The focus of this training was to familiarize staff with the use of the application in a blended learning environment in



addition to its use by individual students requiring various support or needing to earn/restore high school credits necessary for graduation.

- Ongoing bi-weekly staff training offered by Lee Yonika, Worcester Public Schools ELL instructional coach, assists teachers in lesson planning and improving instructional practices for ELL students, thereby building greater capacity within each of our programs.
- Woodward Day School administrators and guidance counselor attended a full day conference on bullying prevention and education presented by Worcester Public Schools, Worcester PD, Worcester Juvenile Court, Worcester DA, Joseph A. Early, and DCU for Kids
- CMSEC faculty are continuing to participate in the Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Bridge courses for DESE endorsement.
- Support staff and program administrators have begun to participate in iPass training, CMSEC's new student information system which will be fully operational at the start of the 2014-2015 school year.

TECHNOLOGY ENHANCEMENTS:

- Over the past year CMSEC has been consulting with the Center for Educational Leadership and technology (CELT) to develop a plan to improve the technology network infrastructure throughout CMSEC's programs. A final plan was outlined in January and set in motion. Four new servers were setup and deployed (one at each of CMSEC's program sites) and a new Active Directory structure was developed. As part of its network redesign, a new Firewall was purchased and installed. The new firewall provides a connection between all CMSEC sites and increases the security of our systems as well as students safety while on the Internet.
- In early February a technology committee was formed to investigate the data recording and reporting needs of CMSEC relative to both student and staff information. The team developed a list of needs and reviewed (with vendors) various student information systems to determine each systems appropriateness for CMSEC. In March the committee determined that iPass from Harris School Solutions was the best system for CMSEC and implementation began immediately.

COMMUNITY/FAMILY ENGAGEMENTS:

- A partnership with the EcoTarium in Worcester has been initiated where students learn about animals, help feed them, and volunteer for services on site. Parents will be encouraged to attend a coffee social at the program to view PowerPoint presentation on the work the students have done.



- Students attended a program at Mechanic's Hall focused on an introduction to American Composers, enhancing their understanding of American history through classical music and composers, the concept of the "common man" (vs. royalty) and the influence of composers' cultural roots. The program began with a piece by Benjamin Franklin and ended with a piece composed specifically for this Mechanics Hall program by a 20th century Massachusetts composer.
- Students continued to reach out to the community and assisted in renovations at a neighborhood church, including painting and cleaning their auditorium/gym.
- A pediatric cardiology nurse practitioner provided a lesson on the functions of the heart on-site at the Heart Hospital. In appreciation, students presented her with shamrocks and heart-shaped boxes of candy for the patients. A poster-sized drawing of the heart by one of our students was given as a gift to the practice.
- A new vocational landscaping job site was established at the Manor Restaurant.
- Elementary students participated in a yard clean-up at the Sutton Senior Center during National Volunteer Week.

FINANCIAL UPDATES:

CMSEC is still awaiting FICA reimbursement from the IRS for three of four quarters of 2009. As it currently stands, the IRS claims the CMSEC owes \$10,000 for these three quarters and our tax attorney has requested a Collection Due Process Hearing. At this time, he has requested that the case be transferred to the IRS Appeals Officer in Boston, who is working with us on the refund claims. It is anticipated that this Hearing and final disposition will be completed over the next several months.

FY15 budget projections and plan has been presented to our member districts. While there will be no rise in tuitions for FY15, the budget assumptions include a number of specific justifications for the overall budgetary increase from FY14. This includes health insurance, property rentals, new positions, salaries, technology, transportation and future capital reserve needs.

The status of real and anticipated expenses are on track relative to the end of year FY14 budget.

BUILDING COMMITTEE UPDATES:

A comprehensive Request for Proposals (RFP) for facilities space was developed and posted in accordance with Chapter 30B applicable laws in April. Due May 2, 2014, this RFP provides potential landlords the opportunity to propose a building suitable to meet the specifications of CMSEC's programs based on a comprehensive space needs analysis.



While it is an aggressive time frame to plan for occupancy for the start of FY16, the committee believes it is possible and the RFP is written with that turn-key expectation. To date, CMSEC has distributed 9 RFPs to potential parties. The open bid process will occur on Friday, May 2, 2014 at 10:00 AM at our administrative office on McKeon Road. Our goal is to find an appropriate location and building that will be best suited to the delivery of a quality education and the needs of our students as well as the supplemental services CMSEC provides.