



**Quarterly Update**  
**Central MA Special Education Collaborative**  
**September 30, 2014**

As we brought the 2013-2014 school year to a close, friends and families joined CMSEC in celebrating a new chapter in the lives of 28 students in June, 2014 as they began their new paths to adulthood. Central MA Academy conferred diplomas to 7 seniors, while the Robert Goddard Academy presented a combination of certificates of attainment and diplomas to 21 of their students who had completed their educational pathways by meeting academic requirements or aging out of public education. Many, if not all of these special young men and women, overcame struggles and personal challenges most adults will never face in their lifetime, and we are proud of them all.

**Program Enhancements**

Following a brief respite before the start of our summer program, activity within the Central MA Special Education Collaborative at the start of FY 15 progress at a steady pace as we focused the majority of our efforts on the development of THRIVE (Transition Program to Help students Reach Independence through Vocational Experiences). This included thorough cleaning, refurbishing, painting, installing interactive digital whiteboards and obtaining necessary curriculum and supplies. Key staff were hired (program coordinator, 3 teachers and 15 instructional assistants) and trained by the May Institute who continue to provide comprehensive and essential consultation through the start of the school year. Their support and oversight not only has ensured new program staff were well-prepared, knowledgeable and confident when the students returned in August, but more importantly, it helped minimize the impact on the students themselves as they familiarized themselves with their new teachers and instructional aides. A successful Open House in August helped relieve nervous anticipation for the families and endorsed a successful transition.

Site coordinators from our three Woodward Day Schools, along with CMSEC's Director of Curriculum, Data and Technology, also had a successful opening to the school year following extensive program planning and development in preparation for new world language and STEM electives.

In addition to staff at THRIVE, there were 23 new hires over the summer, replacing staff through resignations, retirements and transfers. This included 9 teachers, 4 clinicians, 9 instructional assistants and 1 administrative assistant.

**Educator Evaluation**

The leadership team developed and adopted an Educator Evaluation Protocol (manual), consistent with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education mandates relative to the Educator

Evaluation system. As outlined in the manual, CMSEC is committed to implementing this system in a manner that results in a positive contribution to the development and support of instructional excellence. In addition, given Commissioner Chester's urging for more regional-based initiatives among the State's 26 Collaboratives, CMSEC partnered with other Massachusetts collaboratives to offer training of incoming and new personnel in the educator evaluation system. These DESE mandated, module-specific trainings provided cost effective support to our respective organizations (and districts), and included new administrators (2-day) and new teachers (half day) at the start of the school year.

### **Technology Enhancements**

Continuing with the systematic roll-out of CMSEC's new student information system, iPass, all programs are using the system to enter student biographical data, record attendance, and medical information. As first quarter progress reports drew near, staff were provided with training on the use of the rankbook within iPass and the submission of interim and report card grades. A standard template for progress reports and report cards was developed for all programs with middle and high school students and was successfully implemented for the first quarter. Additionally, all programs have begun documenting student behavior, discipline, consequences as well as administrative, parent and student responses. This compilation of data in a standard format and single database will allow CMSEC to further analyze incidents and trends, allowing opportunity to respond accordingly.

This school year, building off of preparatory work from the spring of 2014, CMSEC is more fully utilizing its website and the features within by expanding the use of classroom web pages. Teachers at Central MA Academy, Woodward Day School and Robert H. Goddard Academy, at the request of respective administration, have been provided introductory training on the development of classroom web pages to further engage students in learning both during and after school as well as keeping parents informed.

Across the collaborative, teachers are regularly posting and updating homework, notes and important dates, announcements, projects, and using interactive features, like discussion boards and quizzes.

### **Curriculum Enhancements**

Across the Woodward Day School sites, students are now being provided with the opportunity to engage in hands-on project based learning through a new Science, Technology-Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) elective. Students in this elective are being challenged with real world problems while being led to think critically and develop solutions. As we look to the second quarter, Woodward Day staff will begin to work on collaborative projects incorporating all areas of the curriculum, collectively reinforcing concepts and working together to engage students.



Historically, the vast majority of CMSEC students arrive with assessment results having taken the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) computerized adaptive assessment in their sending school. Prior survey results indicated CMSEC staff wanted to use the assessment data effectively but needed adequate support.

As of the start of the 2014-2015 school year, CMSEC began a pilot implementation of the MAP assessment across all programs. Each program tested select groups of students ranging from as few as 20 students to as many as all enrolled students within a given program. Assessments focused on mathematics, reading and general science. The first testing window for CMSEC began the third week of September and will close on October 24<sup>th</sup>. Winter testing will occur throughout the month of January, with the spring (and final) session occurring within the month of May. A full day of professional development entitled Applying Reports will be provided to teachers on October 10, 2014.

#### **School Law Updates**

Chapter 222 of the Acts of 2012, *An Act Relative to Students Access to Educational Services and Exclusion from School*, became effective on July 1, 2014. As a result CMSECs leadership team participated in comprehensive legal training and gained a full understanding of the law, its purpose, and most importantly, our position in providing member districts with an alternative placement for students to continue to make academic progress during periods of suspensions. Additionally, significant edits were made to our student and policy handbooks, outlining the new regulations in a clear and well-defined manner.

CMSEC is well-prepared, through our Woodward Day School programs, to accept students who have imposed short or long term suspensions. The educational plans, developed by district principals, can be met through classroom instruction, tutoring, and/or online learning opportunities.

#### **Finance and Operations Updates**

Effective July 1, 2014 and following the resignation of Joseph Piniarski, the Board hired a new Collaborative Treasurer, Joseph Meichelbeck. The revised FY15 operating budget of \$13,220,974 met final approval by the Board of Directors on August 14, 2014.