

DISTRICT CURRICULUM ACCOMMODATION PLAN (DCAP)

Purpose: to identify strategies and/or programs within the regular education program in each building that will provide for the diverse needs of students who are not identified as special needs.

The plan shall assist principals in ensuring that all efforts have been made to meet students' needs in regular education. It shall be designed to assist the regular classroom teacher in analyzing and accommodating diverse learning styles of all children in the regular classroom and in providing appropriate services and support within the regular education. The plan must be adopted by the district and individualized for each school building.

Components include

- input from principals and school councils
- support services available
- direct and systematic instruction in reading for all students
- teacher mentoring and collaboration
- encouragement of parental involvement of their children's education
- the plan must be a component of the District Improvement Plan
- Brainstorming all possible accommodations currently in place to build the DCAP

Title I Program

Title One services are provided to three schools in Southbridge who have the highest percent of low income families. Each school has been identified as a school-wide project and all students are eligible for these services. Title I services are supplementary to each building because the funding provides additional staff to reduce class size and provide specific opportunities for our at-risk population to be successful. Students meet in small group settings using a differentiated learning program developed by the staff and principal. In each school, administrators, classroom teachers, Title I personnel, special educators, remedial reading specialists and bilingual teachers work together to provide the educational setting and schedule that meets the needs of every child. We have recently identified reading assessments for every student in grades K—9 to monitor their progress on a regular basis. Students identified as 'at-risk' or not making progress will enter a remediation program that will be specifically differentiated to their reading needs.

There is a screening process in place for both preschool and kindergarten students that has been identified by the Director of Special Education, building principals and staff. A multiple criteria point system is used to determine students eligible for Title I services. Criteria include social and emotional readiness to read, recognition of letters and sounds, ability to write letters and recognize shapes and colors, social maturity to play/work with other children in a group, etc. Each building has inclusion programs and provides (whenever possible) the students with uninterrupted instruction in the classroom.

During the months of May and June classroom teachers review the reading/language arts progress of students to determine which students are functioning below grade level. The children functioning below grade level, based on classroom teacher's assessment in reading/language arts are referred to Title One. These referrals comprise the students who will be tested through a multiple criteria point system developed by the teachers to evaluate reading skills, word and sound recognition, writing readiness and social maturity.

The Southbridge School District fosters extensive collaboration between schools and departments. Professional development is offered for all staff including Title I, Special Education and Sheltered English Immersion on a regular basis throughout the school year. An inclusion model with two staff members (special education teacher, Title I teacher, paraprofessional or tutor) assist the regular education teacher based on the experience of the staff and the needs of students. Title I services are provided through an in-class model at each school with a slightly different approach. For example, one class may have a team teaching approach while another uses the classroom teacher as the major teacher with the Title I teacher acting as a resource for the children as they work. In each building, administrators, staff, special educators and bilingual teachers work together to design a model and schedule that meets students' need. Students identified as 'at-risk' have an Individual Student Success Plan written by a team of staff, the Principal and with input from special education staff and administration. The plans are used on a regular basis by the teachers and math skills.

The Southbridge Public Schools offers a variety of preschool opportunities to meet the varying needs of the population. There is no Title I funding used to support these programs. However, to facilitate the transition of our children from preschool to kindergarten, there are meetings scheduled between the preschool staff and the kindergarten staff to review each child's status. Records are forwarded to kindergarten teachers in the summer for incoming students. Meetings are scheduled for parents to meet the new kindergarten staff and visit their new school.

Academic Support Program

Elementary Program

The school has invested much time analyzing the results of the Stanford Ten Achievement Test (reading) for grade 2-9 and MCAS test results for grades 3-5. Students are considered at-risk if they meet one or more of the following criteria: they scored at or below the 50th percentile in total math on the district administered Stanford Ten; and/or they scored in the Warning or Needs Improvement on the grade specific MCAS. Each year staff and administration in each school review the item analyses, in grade level clusters and develop an action plan to identify immediate, short and long term interventions to remediate students identified as 'at-risk'. In addition, a district-wide action plan is developed to address common areas of need across the district. School and district staff review the success of the action plan at the end of the year and revise them when necessary. Schools utilize the data to select students for the after school program. The primary goal of the program is to provide an after school experience for at-risk students that

incorporates a series of diverse and integrated activities to help each child meet or exceed rigorous state and local standards in mathematics, reading and language arts. The Program is closely linked to classroom instruction and promotes collaboration between staff:

- a. Teachers are hired as staff for the After School Program whenever possible.
- b. Resources, such as the Harcourt Trophies Reading Programs, writing across the curriculum, library pathfinders (based on Big6 projects) are incorporated into the After School Programs as extensions of the classroom instruction.
- c. Southbridge has focused professional development funds on training staff to teach mathematics with a focus on a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts. The relationship between all the mathematics strands are stressed. The district supported the adoption of two new mathematics programs system-wide (K-8) and continues to provide resources and training to teachers as they advance in their own understanding of mathematical concepts every year.
- d. The district established a committee to examine the literacy program we have in place K-8 and has made a commitment to continue the program led by a Literacy Committee. These initiatives represent the interface of direct support to all classroom teachers providing services in the after school program. The overall goal of the program is to raise the standards for at-risk students by providing the extended day school program site that will be delivered in a collaborative and engaging manner with activities that focus on increasing student performance in reading language arts and mathematics. The program integrates activities such as tutoring, self-paced computer instructional programs and curriculum materials purchased specifically for students in this program. This program is dependent on the ability of the district to provide funding.

Middle School Program

The Program offered in the middle school utilizes similar resources as those offered in the elementary schools. It is closely linked to classroom instruction and promotes collaboration between staff:

- a. Teachers are hired as staff for the After School Program whenever possible.
- b. Resources, such as the Harcourt Trophies Readings, Collins writing across the curriculum, the Internet and library resources are incorporated into the After School Programs as extensions of the classroom instruction.
- c. Paraprofessionals serve as positive models for participating students and provide academic assistance and interpersonal skill building for students. Southbridge has focused professional development funds on training staff to teach mathematics with a focus on deeper understanding of mathematical concepts and stress relationships among all the mathematics strands. The district supported the adoption of two new mathematics programs system-wide (K-8) and continues to provide resources and training to teachers as they advance in their own understanding of mathematical concepts. This program is dependent on available funding. Math coaches have been hired for the 2007-2008 school year to facilitate the teaching of mathematics and to assist teachers in the development and implementation of lesson plans.

High School Program

The administrative team has developed a plan with five components to address those grade eleven students who failed the MCAS in the spring, 2001 administration:

Math and English teachers provide instruction to students during the school day. This program is supplemental to the regular classroom programs offered to juniors and seniors in English and mathematics.. These students receive tutoring in classes with a 1:9 ratio for approximately 60 minutes. Students are selected for the program based on MCAS scores that fall within 2-4 points of passing.

Students are invited to attend the after school tutoring programs in mathematics and ELA which runs for approximately 8 weeks.

The high school has established a Freshman Academy to support the learning environment for our newly arrived freshmen. The Academy is staffed with a team of teachers that are assigned to the Academy throughout the year and have the opportunity to create strong connections and bonds with the students throughout the year.

Curriculum and Professional Development

Guiding our professional development program is the belief that intelligence is not static and fixed but dynamic and modifiable. Learning propensities can be enhanced through a process of mediated learning. Mediated learning refers to a process between the student and teacher that produces appropriate learning sets and habits. Content matter presented in such a way increases metacognitive awareness as well as develops critical thinking skills.

Placing the mediated learning experience at the core of our professional development program insures that not only will we have high learning expectations for all students, but also that we will implement the teaching strategies that are necessary to have all students meet those expectations. As educators, it is necessary to develop the cognitive propensities that enable students to learn more efficiently from direct learning experiences. Professional development must, therefore, provide teachers and staff with the necessary prerequisites to establish such a powerful learning environment.

Professional Development refers to those activities that enable an educator to maintain professional skills, remain current with new developments in the field, and continue to broaden his/her professional repertoire, and adjust to changes in curriculum focus. It is the responsibility of the educator to demonstrate the commitment to continued growth, and it is the responsibility of the system to provide a range of activities to support and encourage that commitment.

Because professional development can take many forms, collegial interactions are encouraged in both the formal and informal structures of the professional development plan. Professional growth occurs every day as teachers consult with each other and with supervisors in the development and implementation of curriculum. There is individual growth as teachers explore the research while preparing new lessons. Observing other teachers, both within and outside the system, is also a rich opportunity for growth. In each of our schools, time is valued

as evidenced by common planning time for staff to interact and collaborate together during the day. Conferences and workshops sponsored by professional organizations and educational institutions provide opportunities to extend the knowledge base of teachers. A professional development program also brings in expertise from outside the system, organizes the internal resources of the system, and utilizes the skills of the staff.

Professional Development Objectives

The Southbridge Public School System believes that staff members should be provided with professional development opportunities that are consistent with our beliefs and our goals. Teachers must be able to respond to changes in the characteristics, conditions, and learning needs of students. They must also be able to develop practices that reflect the expansion of subject matter knowledge and new knowledge about teaching and learning. It is belief that we should:

- 1) Provide the staff with a variety of professional development opportunities to support their active participation in the continuous growth of the district vision and guiding belief system
- 2) Provide the staff with opportunities to expand their knowledge base. This complex task includes knowledge of subject matter as well as the teaching methodologies recognized as most effective.
- 3) Provide opportunities for staff to enhance their understanding of the State's CORE Curriculum, Curriculum Frameworks, and other initiatives,
- 4.) Provide opportunities to support the continued process for obtaining recertification and highly qualified status

Quality Professional Development for Educators

High quality professional development is an important prerequisite to increasing student learning. Its influence on students is accomplished principally through its direct effect on teacher and administrator knowledge and practice. Clearly, if professional development does not alter teachers' knowledge or their classroom practices, little improvement in student learning can be expected. Professional Development activities will be supported that meet the following criteria:

- Integration of the District Vision and Mission
- Integration of the Common Core of Learning and the Curriculum Frameworks
- Application of current research, including principles of adult learning and the organizational change process
- Involvement of participants in professional development design, implementation and evaluation
- Integration of assessment models that focus on process rather than product
- Technologies for classroom management, instruction and professional growth
- Models that promote multiple strategies for professional growth that support reflection, mentoring, guided practice, and study groups
- Opportunities to learn from peers
- Encouragement of and support for experimentation and risk-taking
- Content specific and interdisciplinary approaches to teaching, learning, and assessment that incorporates high expectations for all students

- Leadership skill training for school administration and staff
- Follow-up focused on the application of professional development for the improvement of student learning
- Other areas that promote the implementation of Education Reform and student achievement
- Developmentally appropriate strategies for instruction and curriculum that meet the needs of diverse students
- Strategies that reach out to and involve families and communities

Individual Student Success Plans

Every student that has been identified as 'at-risk' through state testing, local testing or national testing has an Individual Student Success Plan. The plan is developed by the student's classroom teacher, guidance counselor, special education teacher, tutor and principal. The plan addresses the specific weakness revealed through the testing program. There are timelines and responsibilities identified for both teacher, student and parent. The plan is reviewed by the student's teacher on a regular basis to determine whether adequate progress is being made. The student may be referred for further services if adequate progress has not been made. The ISSP folder follows the student as he/she moves from grade to grade and school to school so that longitudinal progress can be monitored.

Mentor Program

Southbridge Public Schools implemented a mentor program in the school district to improve student learning by supporting the effectiveness and professional growth of beginning teachers. The plan provides beginning teachers with assistance on a professional and practical level. Mentoring is most successful when beginning teachers and mentors are provided opportunities to work together in a relationship that is based on respect, trust, and confidentiality. Our commitment to the successful induction of new teachers includes an understanding of the need for collegiality and professional growth for all teachers within and across the school district. A school culture that embraces such a structure for teachers' growth results in effective teaching and enhanced learning and achievement. We believe the Mentor Program will assist Southbridge educators to:

- Improve student learning and achievement through quality teaching.
- Meet the challenges they face as they enter a new profession or a new school system by assisting them in their induction to the school climate and culture.
- Increase their personal and professional development by enabling them to gain comfort, confidence and instructional effectiveness.
- Participate in interpersonal and professional support to encourage beginning teachers and their mentors to reflect and dialogue on their teaching and professional growth.
- Remain in the teaching profession and become highly qualified teachers.
- Foster a school culture that honors and practices collegiality and openness that heightens morale and improves instruction and learning.

Components of the Induction/Mentor Program

1. Two-day Orientation
 - Tour of the Town
 - Meeting with Central Office Specialists
 - Meeting with Building Principals
 - Meeting with Mentor
2. Training
 - a. Mentors will participate in a 3-day course for mentor training. The training will consist of (1) skills of effective mentoring, (2) learning, teaching and assessing in a standards-based environment, (3) reading and writing across the curriculum, (4) peer coaching, and (5) classroom observation and positive feedback strategies.
 - b. The beginning teachers will participate in an eighteen-hour course on the beginning teacher. The training will take place throughout the school year. Teachers will receive compensation and professional development points for attendance at the training sessions. This will include instruction on (1) teaching in a standards-based classroom, (2) positive classroom discipline, (3) parent communication, and (4) assessment strategies. One training date will be scheduled to include the mentor in order to forge supportive relationships and allow for discussion on issues in the classroom.
3. Mentor Responsibilities
 - Meet once each week for the month of September to ensure a strong start for the beginning teacher.
 - Meet twice each month from October through May of the school year.
 - Observe one another's classroom, co-teach, and analyze and assess the beginning teacher's practice.
 - Attend initial mentor training and follow-up training every three years.
 - Attend a peer group meeting in October and May.
4. Beginning Teacher Responsibilities
 - Meet once each week for the month of September to ensure a strong start for the beginning teacher.
 - Meet twice each month from October through May of the school year.
5. Principal's Responsibilities
 - Encourage a school culture built on collegiality and support professional collaboration among new and veteran teacher.
 - Select mentors.
 - Facilitate the completion of responsibilities for the mentor and beginning teacher.
 - Conduct an orientation program for beginning teacher and mentor.
6. Guidelines for Mentor Selection
 - Having attained professional teacher status and having worked three or more years in the system whenever possible.
 - Having a minimum of one year teaching at present assignment.
 - Having knowledge of the curriculum frameworks and possessing the ability to support the new teacher in implementing the frameworks.
 - Having knowledge of and using different teaching styles.

- Having demonstrated excellent knowledge of the content area.
 - Being an active listener.
 - Demonstrating a commitment to the profession and an openness to new ideas and approaches.
 - Being knowledgeable of the school's policies, climate, practices and resources.
 - Having the ability to communicate clear, specific, and constructive feedback.
 - Willing to attend support meetings with other mentors.
 - Willing to engage in a collaborative and flexible relationship.
 - Willing to share teaching strategies with beginning teacher.
 - Willing to attend mentor training in summer and throughout the year.
 - Able to maintain confidential relationship.
 - Possessing a sense of humor.
 - Demonstrate a positive, enthusiastic and friendly attitude.
7. Guidelines for Matching Beginning Teacher and Mentor Whenever Possible
- The same grade level
 - The same subject area
 - Close proximity of classrooms
 - Compatible schedules to allow for common prep periods and duties.
8. Program Evaluation
- Mid-year – program evaluation survey or questionnaire to assess the effectiveness of the program for participating teachers.
 - End of year – program evaluation survey or questionnaire to assess the effectiveness of the program for participating teachers and to identify suggestions for improvement.
9. Compensation and Professional Development Points
- Mentors and beginning teachers are eligible to earn up to 30 professional development points per year in the five-year cycle for their mentoring services upon submission of the attached form to the Superintendent's office.
 - Mentors will receive a \$500 stipend.
10. Communication
- An informational booklet describing the program, its mission and goals will be shared with beginning teachers and mentors during the orientation and the Mentor Program will be an electronic link on the Southbridge web site.