



# HINGHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

### WINTER NEWSLETTER

January 2, 2019

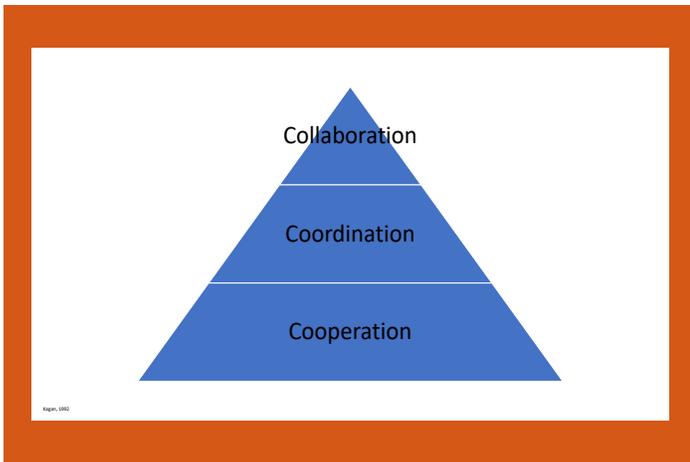
#### FROM THE DIRECTOR:

Dear Special Education Community,

It is with great excitement that the HPS Special Education Department enters into this winter season. Among the many exciting professional development offerings this year, there is one in particular that involves our entire special education community: Using a strengths and challenges model to hold IEP meetings and write IEPs. This initiative is connected to improving communication and transparency. Central to this work is the continued development of our teams.

- Integration of various professional perspectives in decision making
- Integration of the family into team decision making processes
- Active communication
- Role division based on expertise
- A climate of collaboration

In order to develop and maintain highly functional and productive teams, individuals must commit to collaboration, coordination, and collaboration (Kagan, 1992). Cooperation, the foundation, is the partnership between school and home and is typically the easiest to accomplish because all individuals are committed to working together in the interests of a child. Coordination, the center, involves individuals coming together to work toward achieving a shared goal. Even though each person assumes some level of autonomy in their role, there is active engagement in accomplishing this goal. (At your next team meeting, a goal for the meeting may be shared with the group). Collaboration, the peak, can be the most complex and difficult to actualize. This involves consensus, trust, and truth. These elements are necessary for the team to work in a functional way. Read on to find out ways you can contribute to these successful meetings! In March, our special education department will come together again to build on this framework when we learn more about how to use a Strengths and Challenges Model to write Individualized Education Programs.



While the word, “team” is used widely and has many definitions, we primarily subscribe to “the working together of professionals from different disciplines,” also known as multi-disciplinary teaming. We adopt these following elements of multi-disciplinary teams as outlined by Abramson (2002):

- A group of professionals from different disciplines
- A common purpose



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## USING A STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES MODEL

In November, the faculty from the Special Education Department participated in a full day training on running IEP meetings using a strength and challenges model. The format moves away from narrative descriptions of student performance, to more succinct reporting, requiring more preparation in advance of the meeting. You may notice some minor changes to your meetings, mainly in the form of the introduction of a meeting agenda, meeting norms, a meeting goal, and concise, yet meaningful reporting of student performance and progress. These elements serve as the foundation for a strong multi-disciplinary team meeting grounded in cooperation, coordination, and collaboration.

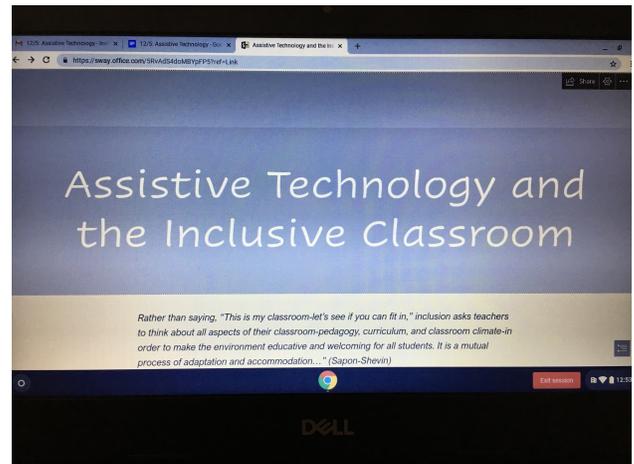
### HOW CAN YOU ENHANCE YOUR PARTICIPATION?

The best way for parents to get ready for a team meeting is to prepare at least 3-5 areas of strength and 3-5 areas of concern regarding your child's progression in school. It is most helpful if these strengths and challenges are directly related to your child's disability. Additionally, sharing a vision about your child's future is extremely important and often difficult to do. Preparing this in advance helps team members support a shared vision and make recommendations to work toward that vision.

At the next SEPAC meeting on January 9<sup>th</sup>, Dr. Suzanne Vinnes will share some more details about this shift and how parents can maximize their participation in this collaborative process.

## VERTICAL TEAMING, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND LANGUAGE BASED LEARNING DISABILITIES

During professional development led by Caroline Farris and Lauren Ciocca on the December 5<sup>th</sup> early release day, Secondary English teachers participated in an "Assistive Technology in the Inclusive Classroom" workshop. Teachers explored new technology that offers speech to text and text to speech features, enhanced paper accessibility, as well as the latest innovations for improved reading comprehension and written expression. Throughout the presentation, teachers learned about how to best support the diverse needs of ALL students, specifically those with language-based learning disabilities. The Special Education Department is excited to have these two progressive educators provide this training to our entire department in March!



## THE SPECIAL EDUCATION CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT TASK FORCE

The Special Education Continuous Improvement Task Force is charged with overseeing special education evaluation. This is quite an undertaking and involves much discussion and healthy debate among its members. So far, our task force has welcomed new members, established group norms and a confidentiality agreement, and have begun delving into Boston University's evaluation of Hingham Middle School's Special Education programming. While we are only in the infant stages of breaking this information down, we are planning an opportunity for the Hingham Community to hear the findings and ask any questions. This date is currently being scheduled and is anticipated to occur during the second half of January. Stay tuned!

### ASK THE DIRECTOR

Do you have a question about Special Education instruction, policy, or process? If so, please email your question to Lisa White ([lwhite@hinghamschools.org](mailto:lwhite@hinghamschools.org)) with the subject line: Question for Special Education Newsletter, and we may post your question and an answer in our next edition.