

Public Schools of Brookline

District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP)

The following information is provided to comply with the Massachusetts General Laws Ch. 71 Section 38Q ½ mandating that school districts provide a District Curriculum Accommodation Plan designed to assist Principals in ensuring that all efforts have been made to meet students' needs in regular education and avoid unnecessary referrals to special education. In addition, Section 59C of Ch.71 mandates that each School Council meets with the Principal "for the development, implementation and assessment of the curriculum accommodation plan" to be individualized for each school.

The Public Schools of Brookline is proud of its richly diverse student body. This diversity infuses our schools and classrooms with varied experiences and strengths, yet it also presents unique challenges. Teachers regularly grapple with how to meet the needs of Brookline students who represent a broad range of learning styles, life experiences, languages spoken, parental and familial expectations, previous school experiences, and background skills and knowledge. The purpose of the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) is to describe the strategies and resources that are available to classroom teachers and specialists in their quest to address the diverse learning needs of our students outside of special education. The DCAP is to be used by Child Study Teams with teachers before *and instead of* students being evaluated to determine special education eligibility. *The process of Child Study Teams and the use of the DCAP are not intended for the sole use of beginning the special education evaluation process.*

As stated by the MA DOE, the targeted areas for the DCAP are:

1. Strategies to assist regular education classroom teachers to help them analyze and accommodate various students' learning needs, including students who are English Language Learners, and to manage students' behavior effectively;
2. Support services that are available to students through the regular education program;
3. Direct and systematic instruction in reading for all students;
4. Teacher mentoring and collaboration; and,
5. Parental involvement in their children's education.

"The instructional support system should consist of ongoing systemic efforts to accommodate any student's learning needs within the general education classroom. Instructional support must be viewed as a viable intervention strategy; one that is expected to occur for any student encountering difficulties in learning."¹

¹ MA Department of Education, "Is Special Education the Right Service? A Technical Assistance Guide," pp. 5-6, Working Draft – March 2001.

Curriculum Accommodations

Supports for General Education Classroom Teachers

Accommodations are changes in how a student may access information and demonstrate learning. Accommodations do not substantially change the instructional level, content, or performance criteria. The changes are made in order to provide a student with equal access to learning and equal opportunity to show what he or she knows and is able to do.

Instructional Strategies

Elementary

Below are checklists of instructional strategies Brookline elementary teachers use as to maximize student success in general education classrooms. The lists are broken down by domain: behavior, reading, writing and mathematics.

Behavior

Listed below are successful teaching strategies to address issues of behavior.

To improve ability to attend to verbal information:

- Shortened length of listening activities
- Reduced visual distractions in the room
- Provided pictures and/or other visual cues
- Wrote key vocabulary on the board
- Used audio material presented through headphones
- Used choral speaking in a group to maintain attention
- Provided opportunities for periodic rehearsal of information presented orally
- Provided a scribe for classroom notes
- Provided a scribe to write the important information that was presented orally
- Allowed student to copy notes from a peer
- Used graphic organizers
- Scheduled subject when student is more alert
- Broke longer presentations into shorter units
- Allowed student to tape lesson
- Touched or cued student when attention waned
- Re-directed student when attention waned
- Changed student's seat to decrease distractions
- Modified/shortened the tasks and amount of material
- Used material on the student's instructional/independent level

- Sent home extra set of texts
- Used preferential seating
- Allowed for periodic breaks

To improve transitions between activities:

- Kept routines structured
- Posted expected rules & behavior
- Marked student's space & materials
- Posted the schedule for the day
- Cued student prior to transitions
- Allowed the student opportunities for movement, periodically through the day
- Practiced transition routines

To improve positive group participation skills:

- Gave specific feedback to student when student was successful
- Used role-playing to teach appropriate behaviors
- Allowed rehearsal opportunities
- Provided a "cool down" space
- Used time out procedure for acting out or aggressive behaviors
- Used a written behavior contract with student
- Used regular feedback system between home & school
- Provided choices for student

<input type="checkbox"/> Provided individual/small group instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Sent home extra set of texts <u>To improve work completion:</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Used student checklists <input type="checkbox"/> Used a study carrel <input type="checkbox"/> Used a timer <input type="checkbox"/> Used headset to block extraneous noise <input type="checkbox"/> Used a reinforcement system, such as stickers or tokens <input type="checkbox"/> Used work assignment lists <input type="checkbox"/> Broke lengthy, long-term assignment into smaller parts <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced/modified assignment <input type="checkbox"/> Simplified worksheets/tasks	<input type="checkbox"/> Problem-solved with the student <input type="checkbox"/> Other strategies, including consultations with other specialists:
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Reading

Listed below are successful teaching strategies to support students as they learn to read.

<u>To improve phonological awareness, the following instruction/activities were delivered 1-1 or in a small group:</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Oral rhyming activities <input type="checkbox"/> Segmenting spoken sentences into words <input type="checkbox"/> Segmenting spoken words into syllables <input type="checkbox"/> Identifying and practicing onset and rhyme sounds <input type="checkbox"/> Identifying spoken words w/ same initial sounds <input type="checkbox"/> Identifying spoken words w/ same end sounds <input type="checkbox"/> Blending orally presented phonemes into words <input type="checkbox"/> Segmenting orally presented words into phonemes <u>To improve decoding skills:</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Checked vision <input type="checkbox"/> Presented phonemic awareness activities <input type="checkbox"/> Used rhyming activities <input type="checkbox"/> Used multi-sensory or VAKT (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile) instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Matched letter letters/sounds (initial and final letters) <input type="checkbox"/> Used blending sounds to read real and nonsense words <input type="checkbox"/> Used cues for sound blending <input type="checkbox"/> Used finger/markers for tracking left-to-right <input type="checkbox"/> Presented and practiced syllabication rules <input type="checkbox"/> Synthesized words (part of whole) <input type="checkbox"/> Segmented words (whole to part) <input type="checkbox"/> Used a variety of texts <input type="checkbox"/> Used word families <input type="checkbox"/> Provided opportunities for daily reading <input type="checkbox"/> Repeated phonic rules verbally (auditory cues) <input type="checkbox"/> Presented phonic rules on a chart (visual cues)	<input type="checkbox"/> Taught self monitoring <input type="checkbox"/> Taught use of graphic/semantic organizers <input type="checkbox"/> Taught use of questions to guide reading <input type="checkbox"/> Taught ways to generate questions <input type="checkbox"/> Taught story structures <input type="checkbox"/> Taught summarization <input type="checkbox"/> Taught elaboration (prediction, prior knowledge, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Discussed pictures before reading text (visual cues) <input type="checkbox"/> Had student answer questions orally <input type="checkbox"/> Had student illustrate sentences or stories <input type="checkbox"/> Highlighted key concepts in text <input type="checkbox"/> Had student write sentences for or illustrate reading vocabulary words <input type="checkbox"/> Had student to list details of story <input type="checkbox"/> Used sequence pictures then retold story <input type="checkbox"/> Had student to complete cloze sentences and/or paragraphs <input type="checkbox"/> Had students finish incomplete stories <input type="checkbox"/> Used guided reading materials <input type="checkbox"/> Used high interest texts at instructional and independent reading levels <input type="checkbox"/> Used supplemental materials/resources (list): <u>To improve fluency:</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Modeled fluent reading <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple readings of same text <input type="checkbox"/> Choral reading
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<input type="checkbox"/> Used log of misread words for practice <input type="checkbox"/> Used literature-based instruction w/ semantic cues <input type="checkbox"/> Provided instruction in small groups <input type="checkbox"/> Provided instruction 1-1 <input type="checkbox"/> Sent home word list for home practice sessions <input type="checkbox"/> Set up a home reading system w/ parents <input type="checkbox"/> Used guided reading groups <input type="checkbox"/> Used read alouds: charts, stories, CVC, CVCe, blends, word families, diphthongs, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Paired students for practice reading aloud <p><u>To improve sight word recognition:</u></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Provided flash cards for drill/practice <input type="checkbox"/> Used configuration cues <input type="checkbox"/> Sent home word lists for home practice <input type="checkbox"/> Used language experience/concrete meaning <input type="checkbox"/> Used a word wall <p><u>To improve reading comprehension skills:</u></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-read story to student <input type="checkbox"/> Re-read favorite stories and independent-leveled text <input type="checkbox"/> Read stories w/ predictable text	<input type="checkbox"/> Echo reading <input type="checkbox"/> Shared reading <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple readings of texts at independent level <p><u>To improve vocabulary acquisition:</u></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Sorted words into basic categories <input type="checkbox"/> Described common objects <input type="checkbox"/> Classified categories of words <input type="checkbox"/> Taught common synonyms and antonyms <input type="checkbox"/> Used known word in compound word <input type="checkbox"/> Taught homophones/homographs <input type="checkbox"/> Used dictionary/thesaurus to locate words meanings <input type="checkbox"/> Taught strategy of using knowledge of word origins, synonyms, etc. to derive meaning <input type="checkbox"/> Other strategies, including consultations with other specialists:
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Writing

Listed below are successful teaching strategies to support students as they learn to write.

<p><u>To improve spelling:</u></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Used multi-sensory approach <input type="checkbox"/> Allowed student to spell into tape recorder <input type="checkbox"/> Used picture or color cues or word shapes <input type="checkbox"/> Taught sight words in a meaningful phrase or sentence <input type="checkbox"/> Taught specific spelling rules <input type="checkbox"/> Used same words for reading, spelling, and writing tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced number of expected words Tested student orally <input type="checkbox"/> Sent home spelling words for practice <input type="checkbox"/> Made individualized word lists to learn, using miscues from student's work <p><u>To improve handwriting:</u></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Provided hand strengthen activities (e.g. clay, squeeze ball) <input type="checkbox"/> Provided special paper (e.g. wider spaced lines, graph paper) <input type="checkbox"/> Used pencil grip <input type="checkbox"/> Used various writing tools	<input type="checkbox"/> Broke up long written assignments into smaller parts <input type="checkbox"/> Allowed student to vocalize while writing <input type="checkbox"/> Read back pieces to student to see if written work makes sense <input type="checkbox"/> Taught revision skills <input type="checkbox"/> Gave student choices about topic <input type="checkbox"/> Other strategies, including consultations with other specialists:
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<input type="checkbox"/> Provided alphabet and number strips at seat <input type="checkbox"/> Used multi-sensory activities (e.g. sandpaper, sand, foam) <input type="checkbox"/> Used cues (e.g. finger spaces) for spacing between words <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced copying from book or board <input type="checkbox"/> Seated student near board for copying <u>To improve written expression:</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Allowed student verbalize or tape record thoughts before writing <input type="checkbox"/> Used word processor for written tasks/assignments <input type="checkbox"/> Helped student get started on written tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Used graphic organizers <input type="checkbox"/> Allowed un-timed, written assessments <input type="checkbox"/> Used story starters or prompts <input type="checkbox"/> Used rubric as a guide for written assignments <input type="checkbox"/> Used checklist/s for proofing written work	
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Mathematics

Listed below are successful teaching strategies to support students as they learn mathematics.

<u>Skills/readiness are lower than grade level:</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Assessed for level of instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Provided small group instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Allowed student to use math facts table <input type="checkbox"/> Used manipulatives <u>To improve the memorizing of math facts:</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Taught and practiced in a systematic way <input type="checkbox"/> Provided extra opportunities to practice <input type="checkbox"/> Provided references to assist in fact calculation <input type="checkbox"/> Used mnemonic devices when possible <input type="checkbox"/> Used songs, rhymes or games <u>To improve ability to attend to important details:</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Highlighted operational signs/key words and phrases in math problems <input type="checkbox"/> Used vertical lines/graph paper for organizing work <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced the amount of problems on a page <input type="checkbox"/> Used a window overlay to isolate items on a page	<u>To improve the understanding of concepts:</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Used concrete objects/manipulatives <input type="checkbox"/> Gave extra time to explore and practice <input type="checkbox"/> Taught/analyzed new vocabulary/terms <input type="checkbox"/> Used simple, consistent language <input type="checkbox"/> Provided visuals and examples <input type="checkbox"/> Provided instruction in small group or 1-1 <input type="checkbox"/> Other strategies, including consultations with other specialists:
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<input type="checkbox"/> Had student repeat directions <u>Inability to read grade level word problems due to lower reading level:</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Aligned math word problems and directions with current reading level <u>To increase the rate of work completion:</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced number of problems to complete <input type="checkbox"/> Sent unfinished work home to complete <input type="checkbox"/> Gave choices <input type="checkbox"/> Used a timer <input type="checkbox"/> Broke up long assignments into parts <u>To improve ability to sequence steps for computation:</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Provided multiple reviews of steps <input type="checkbox"/> Used reference guide at seat <input type="checkbox"/> Used acronyms and mnemonic devices <input type="checkbox"/> Color coded steps <input type="checkbox"/> Used manipulatives	
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High School²

Below is a list of accommodations high school teachers may employ.

*** DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR STUDENTS**

- Personally connect with your students each day.
- Begin with something positive in all feedback with students and parents.
- Learn about who your students are outside of your classroom.

*** DEVELOP A MULTI-MODAL AND ECLECTIC INSTRUCTIONAL REPERTOIRE**

- Explain directions and assignments both orally and in writing.
- Present new or difficult information both visually and auditorily (outlines, key words, notes, agenda).
- Provide models of desired work products.
- Provide active learning experiences in class (demonstrations, dramatic performances, debates, role plays, peer review of student work, etc.) in addition to lecture and to note-taking.

*** PRESENT THE BIG PICTURE...MAKE THE EDUCATIONAL PATHWAY CLEAR**

- Begin with an overview of topics to be covered each day, and a review of the previous lecture/lesson.
- Present overriding topics/themes to provide students with a road map for each unit.

² This list of accommodations for BHS is a part of the BHS ICAP (Individual Curriculum Accommodation Plan) created and announced March 2010

- "Plan backwards" and make explicit what you want the student to know and be able to do by the end of a lesson, unit, course.

ESTABLISH PREDICTABLE CLASSROOM ROUTINES

- Write the daily agenda on the board so students can follow along easily.
- Provide a predictable week so students know what to expect on different days, different parts of days
- Write homework in same place each day, and/or provide homework in hand-outs or on-line
- Give enough time to explain homework assignments fully.

*** PROVIDE ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR CLASSWORK, HOMEWORK, AND TESTS**

- Help students develop strategies for note-taking, reading challenging texts, outlining, writing a paper or lab report.
- Provide a time-line for long-range assignments suggesting intermediate due dates.
- Provide a unit calendar and/or weekly syllabus; include critical information such as reading deadlines, quizzes, tests, and project due dates.
- Provide a checklist students can use to organize themselves for assignments, homework and notes.
- Provide study guides/outlines for lectures and tests; describe the format and content of tests.
- Post materials on web-lab for easy reference

*** CONTINUALLY CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING**

- Provide periodic summaries during lecture.
- Randomly check student understanding throughout the lesson.
- Give interim assessments.

*** ENCOURAGE THE USE OF ADAPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES**

- Word processor, spell-checker, calculator, textbooks, books on tape, etc.

*** ASSESS WITH VARIED TECHNIQUES**

- Consider: oral tests, written tests, performance evaluations, portfolios, and test taking in a different setting.
- Allow students to clarify or rephrase a test/exam question in their own words to check for understanding.
- Provide extra time for test completion as needed; reduce the number of questions for certain students; write a 30-minute test for a 50-minute period; allow students to finish the test after the period is over in one of the Academic Centers (including Tutorial and Learning Centers).
- Explain directions and vocabulary that may be confusing and lead to incorrect responses.

*** PROVIDE SPECIFIC ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH IEPs/504PLANS**

- Review IEPs and 504 Plans.
- Consult with liaisons

Processes

Part of determining the best strategies to support a student in the general education classroom is to ***identify the student's strengths and challenges***. Below is a list of elements of learning. For each element, teachers identify the student's level of performance (excelling, meeting expectations, struggling, inconsistent, or not applicable).

Attention	Excelling	Meeting Expectations	Struggling	Inconsistent	N/A
Is focused & alert during whole group activities					
Initiates work independently					
Completes work independently					
Sits still for an appropriate length of time					
Performs consistently					
Is able to distinguish between important/unimportant information					
Connects new information w/ previous experiences					
Can focus on low interest tasks					
Plans responses, anticipates outcomes					
Self-monitors work					
Self-monitors behavior					
Works at appropriate speed					
Transitions well					
Higher Order Cognition	Excelling	Meeting Expectations	Struggling	Inconsistent	N/A
Uses effective problem solving strategies					
Can demonstrate ideas nonverbally					
Understands/generates appropriate humor					
Takes ideas and expands them					
Uses imagination to develop ideas					
Language Expressive/Receptive	Excelling	Meeting Expectations	Struggling	Inconsistent	N/A
Expresses written ideas in complete sentences					
Speaks fluently w/ appropriate vocabulary					
Decodes connected text effectively					
Associates sounds w/ corresponding symbols					
Reads individual words					
Comprehends what s/he reads					
Understands directions					

Neuromotor	Excelling	Meeting Expectations	Struggling	Inconsistent	N/A
Coordinated large muscle movement					
Drawing is age appropriate					
Handles manipulatives					
Demonstrates appropriate fine motor abilities (cutting, typing, etc.)					
Uses correct pencil grip					
Handwriting is legible; letters are well formed					
Sustains handwriting tasks w/o stress					
Spatial Ordering	Excelling	Meeting Expectations	Struggling	Inconsistent	N/A
Can recognize basic shapes					
Can organize & arrange print on page					
Keeps belongings, supplies, resources organized					
Temporal-Sequential Ordering	Excelling	Meeting Expectations	Struggling	Inconsistent	N/A
Follows sequence of steps & routines					
Manages time appropriately					
Social Cognition	Excelling	Meeting Expectations	Struggling	Inconsistent	N/A
Gets along well w/ peers in structures situations					
Gets along well w/ peers in unstructured situations					
Speaks appropriately @ appropriate times					
Is able to self advocate					
Can resolve conflicts w/ peers					
Behaves appropriately to the situation					
Is sensitive to the needs/feelings of others					
Memory	Excelling	Meeting Expectations	Struggling	Inconsistent	N/A
Retains new information					
Copies from board or text					
Can manage multi-component tasks					
Remembers facts					
Remembers patterns					
Remembers routines					

Below is **a process to support classroom teachers with their inquiry** around a student who is experiencing difficulty. This process is intended to be completed prior to accessing support from the school's Child Study Team (CST).

- CONSULT** with your student, his or her parents, and other professionals who work with and/or know your student.
Goal: To determine the student's level of awareness of the issue, to see if it is also present at home or in other settings, to gather a history of the student, and to determine what strategies have been used in the past.
- CONSIDER** your student's cultural and linguistic background.
Goal: To determine if a student's limited familiarity with our country and language may be interfering with the student's success at school and to investigate the typical developmental stages of ELL learners.
- REVIEW** your student's cumulative folder (in the main office), literacy & math folders (in your classroom), and guidance folder (if applicable, in the guidance office).
Goal: Gather a history of your student's learning and behavior strengths and areas of need.
- OBSERVE** your student in multiple environments.
Goal: Make note of where the issue is present or not, and the frequency and intensity of the issue in different settings.
- ASSESS** your student's progress in all curriculum areas, including specials.
Goal: To determine if a common academic demand exacerbates or lessens the issue.
- REVIEW** your student's work habits.
Goal: Determine the role of organizational and study habits in maintaining the issue.
- IDENTIFY** your student's learning **STRENGTHS**, **AFFINITIES**, and **AREAS OF NEED**.
Goal: To use your student's strengths and affinities to support areas of need.
- If applicable, **PRESENT** your student to colleagues for their feedback.
Goal: To collaborate with colleagues in thinking about and managing the issue.
- CHOOSE** and **IMPLEMENT** instructional/behavioral strategies. Continue using these strategies for four to six weeks. **DOCUMENT** progress and results.

Child Study Teams (CSTs)

Child Study Team (CST) is ***a process for collaborative problem solving***. The goal of CST is for students to succeed in general education classrooms with interventions that are targeted to students' learning needs, with attention to monitoring and documenting progress, close evaluation of that progress and determination of appropriate next steps. A CST is a group of 6-8 educators across multiple roles that engage in collaborative inquiry and problem solving with a presenting general education classroom teacher. When a teacher sees that a student is struggling with academic and/or behavioral issues and the teacher's strategies to support the students learning are not yielding the desired results, the teacher is encouraged to bring this quandary to the CST for feedback and support.

Child Study Teams are led by educators who are trained and experienced facilitators of collaborative problem solving. A Child Study Team meeting begins with the presenting teacher sharing student work and observations to inform the CST in order to gain a deep understanding of the student's learning profile and studies and reflects upon the strategies used by the teacher thus far. Through this review, the CST and presenting teacher collaboratively create a plan of strategies to support the student and a plan to document the student's progress.

CSTs in Brookline are defined in detail in the *Public Schools of Brookline Child Study Teams: Framework and Guidelines* (August 2010). This document, created with input from educators across the system, clarifies the elements of CSTs across Brookline.

A. Purpose of the Public Schools of Brookline Child Study Teams: Framework and Guidelines

Brookline is proud to be a diverse school community. With the strengths of this diversity come challenges. Regularly, teachers grapple with how to meet the needs of Brookline students across a broad range of learning styles, life experiences, languages spoken, expectations from parents and families, previous school experiences, and background skills and knowledge. Within this context, a Brookline teacher might say, "I've tried everything I know and I just can't seem to get the growth I would expect from this student. I wonder what's going on with her. What else can we do?" Child Study Teams (CSTs) support such inquiry. Within a school culture that values collaboration and inquiry, CSTs can help teachers, schools, and our school system respond to the diverse needs of all Brookline students.

The purpose of the *Public Schools of Brookline Child Study Team: Framework and Guidelines* is to clarify all elements of the process in order to support and strengthen each school's CST, always maintaining the focus on improving student learning. It represents what we know now and it will evolve as we learn more. The *Framework and Guidelines* are offered with a welcoming spirit, inviting educators to see their model of CST within the framework and to apply these guidelines to deepen their understanding of CSTs and the support that is available throughout the system. Beyond this primary purpose of the *Framework and Guidelines*, special attention has been paid to acknowledging the inextricable connection between CSTs and the culture of a school. When appropriate, the *Framework and Guidelines* help to create an understanding of this relationship and provide various tools and processes that nurture a developing professional learning community. If the purposes of the *Framework and Guidelines* are fully realized, it will be clear how CSTs provide

the potential for Brookline educators to experience the synergy created when we question, wonder and learn together in support of every child.

B. 1. The Larger Context of Child Study Teams

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975), which later became Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1990, required that states provide a free and appropriate public education for all students with disabilities. Specifically:

“Massachusetts school districts are required to identify, locate and evaluate all children with disabilities residing in the State, including children with disabilities attending private schools, regardless of the severity of their disability, and who are in need of special education and related services. Massachusetts school districts include as part of their child find responsibilities both highly mobile children with disabilities (such as migrant and homeless children); and children who are suspected of being a child with a disability and in need of special education, even though they are advancing from grade to grade.”³

In effect, this mandate required school districts to seek out struggling students who already had a disability or who were suspected of having a disability and offer them services. To assess for learning disabilities, psychological and educational testing were used with a focus on the ability-achievement discrepancy model (i.e. if a student had an average IQ but low academic achievement scores, they were labeled as learning disabled and given special education services). CSTs were born out of this “child find law” as teachers needed someplace to go within their schools when they were faced with a struggling student.

There are several points in the above mandate which define a need for CSTs. The first is that even “highly mobile children” must be evaluated to see if they have a disability. Yet students who travel from district to district, or children who miss chunks of school time while their families look for housing, may appear “learning disabled” given that they have not been exposed to certain academic skills or concepts. Thus the use of the ability-achievement model might over-identify these children as disabled. The second interesting point is that the mandate does not state that every student about whom there is a concern must be designated as a special education student.⁴ This opens up a need for individualized, targeted services and interventions that are provided under the “general education” umbrella. In both of these cases, CSTs provide a means of getting to know a child’s individualized needs and history to ensure that the child is served appropriately and in the “least restrictive environment.”

CSTs took on an even more important role in the quest to meet each child’s educational needs following the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004. Prior to 2004, the ability-achievement model of identifying disabilities was criticized as being a “wait to fail” model, in that students had to have “low achievement” before services were implemented. Moreover, this approach had the effect over time of over-identifying students with different racial or cultural backgrounds as “disabled” when

³ Massachusetts Department of Education Part B Eligibility. (2003). Retrieved June 30, 2010, from http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/2003/news/partb_eligibility.pdf

⁴ Walsh, J. (2008). RTI vs. Child Find: A Natural Tension. *This Just In...* Retrieved June 30, 2010

really, these children needed additional instruction but a disability was not in evidence. Thus, CSTs were able to more responsibly evaluate which students actually had a disability by supporting the general classroom teacher to employ teaching strategies geared to support different kinds of learners. If several rounds of strategies had been applied and found to be unsuccessful, then students were referred for a special education evaluation.⁵

The 2004 revision of IDEA allowed for a different way of evaluating for the presence of a disability: the Response to Intervention (RtI) model. This model provides routine screening to identify all students who may be at risk for learning difficulties in order to see which students are or are not making progress with generalized classroom instruction. If a student is not making progress, further (general education) assessments may be needed, and more intensive, targeted (general education) interventions and progress monitoring may be implemented for a set period of time. If documentation of the interventions shows that a student continues not to make progress at a rate similar to his or her peers after this “second tier” of targeted interventions, then a referral for a special education evaluation may be warranted.

Currently, CSTs vary in name from state to state but serve the same purpose: to support classroom teachers in identifying and applying instructional strategies that support many different types of learners. They also serve a preventative function in that they support students in the general education setting who are having difficulty before they fail or lose a great deal of academic ground. Current CSTs appear to be very closely tied to the RtI model of identifying learning disabilities in that RtI also is designed to support all students, and to only refer non-responding students for special education evaluations. Notably, the identification of student strengths is a key component of designing successful interventions and strategies.

In a 2008 Connecticut court case in which parents felt that the school had not adequately served their child using the CST model, the court ruled that, “...the use of alternative programs, such as CSTs, is...[consistent] with...IDEA.... [and] it is sensible policy for LEAs [Local Education Agencies, i.e. school districts] to explore options in the regular education environment before designating a child as a special education student.”⁶ However, CSTs should not function as roadblocks or “speed bumps” on the road to a child receiving special education services.⁷ In the case that teachers and parents are clear that a child truly has a disability, a referral should not be delayed, and any referral from a parent should be acted upon in a timely manner by following the proper procedures.

B. 2. Conceptual Framework of RtI in Brookline

Meeting the needs of the wide range of learners represented in Brookline’s classrooms is a daunting task. Even with the district’s high quality instruction, some students struggle to acquire the knowledge or requisite skills needed to meet grade level expectations. Current research suggests that

⁵ Deninger, M. (2008). *Disproportionality: A Look at Special Education and Race in the Commonwealth*. Office of Strategic Planning, Research, and Evaluation. Retrieved June 30, 2010

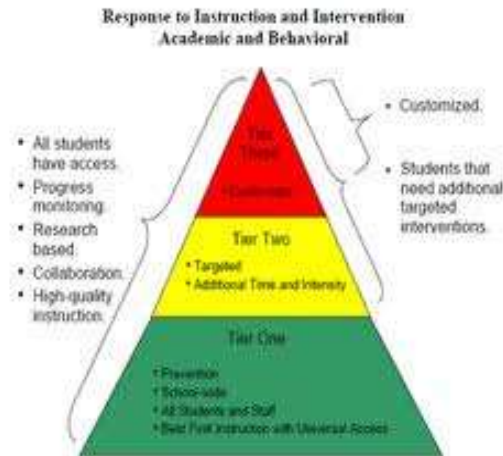
⁶ Walsh, J. (2008). RTI vs. Child Find: A Natural Tension. *This Just In...* Retrieved June 30, 2010

⁷ Walsh, J. (2008). RTI vs. Child Find: A Natural Tension. *This Just In...* Retrieved June 30, 2010

utilizing a Response to Intervention (RtI) approach offers teachers a way to assess and work more effectively with struggling learners.

Response to Intervention (RtI) is a problem-solving framework that focuses on providing high quality instruction and intervention matched to student needs. Interventions are determined by monitoring student progress and collecting student performance data (NASDSE/CASE, 2006; NASP, 2006). An effective RtI model provides for the *early identification* of student learning and behavioral needs and provides students with timely support when necessary. This is a paradigm shift from what is often referred to as the “wait to fail” method in which students must be failing significantly before they receive support.

RtI models vary considerably, but most are based on a framework consisting of three tiers that are often represented in the form of a pyramid. Each level of the pyramid represents a tier, and each tier represents the percentage of students generally found at that level. Generally, 80% of the students in a classroom are in Tier One, 15% in Tier Two, and 5% in Tier 3.



Tier One: At this tier, the classroom teacher is providing high quality instruction and routinely assessing students (progress monitoring) to ensure that they are acquiring expected skills and knowledge. Teachers may use flexible grouping, remediation, and/or differentiated instruction to facilitate student learning. Should a student or group of students not show evidence of expected growth, the teacher should consider accessing the support of CST. Through the CST process, the teacher may be provided with additional instructional strategies or accommodations to use in the classroom (CST Initial Action Plan). The teacher then collects data to determine if the strategy or intervention is achieving the desired result and shares this information with the CST. If the intervention has not been successful, the CST team may consider a more intensive response through Tier Two.

Tier Two: The second tier is characterized by the need for a more significant level of support (intervention) for struggling students. At this level, additional personnel such as the literacy or math specialist *may* be directly involved in the intervention. The student’s response to the intervention is closely monitored and data are collected over a six – eight week period. Should the student not respond to the intervention, an alternate approach may be identified and additional data will be

collected. This cycle of inquiry and data collection continues until the team determines that the evidence collected suggests a more intensive approach is warranted through Tier Three.

RtI in K-8 Literacy – Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) LLI is a reading intervention program designed to lift the literacy achievement of students who are falling below grade level expectations in reading. LLI is a small-group, supplementary intervention system designed to help teachers provide powerful, daily, small-group instruction for the lowest achieving students.

Tier Three: At this Tier, students have not responded to Tier Two interventions. These students may qualify for special education if there is a suspected disability or they may be evaluated for possible placement in special education.

Brookline is building the capacity for a more comprehensive application of the RtI framework through the DCAP (District Curriculum Accommodation Plan) and CST process. In some Brookline schools, frameworks similar to RtI are already in development. These structures are characterized by collaborative decision-making in response to student performance data. In time, system-wide CSTs will work together to develop more systematic approaches to data collection and interventions. Moreover, teachers will have additional data sources to consider as common assessments are developed and universal screening tools are identified. For now, teachers will continue to use current classroom assessments, DRA, QRI, and numerous other measures to monitor student progress and inform instruction and intervention. Brookline’s evolving CSTs will serve as the vehicle to facilitate the district’s move to an effective RtI model.

C. Purpose of CSTs

The goal of the Child Study Team (CST) is for students to succeed in general education classrooms with interventions that are targeted to students’ learning needs, with attention to monitoring and documenting progress, close evaluation of that progress and determination of appropriate next steps. A CST is a group of 6-8 educators across multiple roles that engage in collaborative inquiry and problem solving with a presenting general education classroom teacher. When a teacher sees that a student is struggling with academic and/or behavioral issues and the teacher’s strategies to support the student’s learning are not yielding the desired results, the teacher is encouraged to bring this quandary to the CST for feedback and support.

D. Process of CSTs

Child Study Teams are led by educators who are trained and experienced facilitators of collaborative problem solving. A Child Study Team meeting begins with the presenting teacher sharing student work and observations to inform the CST in order to gain a deep understanding of the student’s learning profile and studies and reflects upon the strategies used by the teacher thus far. Through this review, the CST and presenting teacher collaboratively create a plan of strategies to support the student and a plan to document the student’s progress.

SYSTEM-WIDE INITIATIVES

English Language Arts

PSB is in its third year of a major K-8 literacy initiative. The foundational elements of the improvements of literacy are the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS), Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI), and literacy specialists. Our K-8 literacy educators include literacy interventionists and literacy coaches. The literacy interventionist staffing is calculated by estimating that 10% of grade K-3 students and 5% of grade 4-8 students will need formal literacy intervention and, on average, each literacy interventionist serves 25 students. The budget supports one literacy coach at each school, serving grades K-2 or 3-5. In addition there are two district literacy coaches who will be shared across the schools for grades 6-8.

Our literacy interventionist model uses fewer FTEs than recommended in the current literature. *Reading Recovery* recommends literacy interventionist coverage for 20% of the student population, and up to 25% for high-needs schools. However, based upon our experience with the success of our literacy initiative, we are confident that we will have sufficient staffing to address student needs with the 10%/5% estimate. Our literacy-coaching model follows the *Literacy Collaborative*, with literacy coaches for grade spans K-2, 3-5 and 6-8.

Mathematics

Math specialists serve a critical role in supporting the regular education teacher in the classroom with students who are in need of support. The allocation of K-8 math specialists' in a school is based on the number of grades served and intervention groups, at 45 minutes of instruction per group with each group meeting 5 days a week. Math intervention groups can be between 4-8 students per group. In addition, four (4) instructional coaches will provide a .5 FTE for every building. These FTE allocations are to be program-based initially with adjustments for enrollment based on the experience of the program.

Currently, math specialists perform the roles of both interventionist and coach. Going forward, math specialists will be identified as either an interventionist or a coach, based on the successful literacy model of intervention and instructional coaching. By FY2019, each elementary school will have two (2) math interventionists to serve the nine (9) grades across K-8. In addition, four (4) math coaches will be shared across the district, .5 FTE at each school.

In 2009, the School Committee adopted The Strategic Plan of the Public Schools of Brookline to provide a catalyst for our future educational endeavors and a blueprint for documenting our system's continued success. The Strategic Plan's Vision, Mission, and Core Values serve as the framework for the four (4) goals:

Goal 1 Increase the achievement of all students by creating learning environments that successfully balance content, pedagogy and student-teacher relationships.

Goal 2 Eliminate achievement gaps with respect to race, ethnicity and socio-economic status and increase the achievement of students with special needs through individualized strategies and programs.

Goal 3 Prepare students with the intellectual, interpersonal and reflective skills needed to thrive in an increasingly complex and diverse global society.

Goal 4 Foster a cycle of continuous improvement by using data to effectively examine system-wide programs and practices.

All system-wide initiatives serve as a mechanism for reaching these four goals, including for example: Parent Communication and Involvement, Child Study Teams, Program Review, Professional Development, Assessments of Student Learning and Innovative Programs.

The Strategic Plan 2.0 Committee is in the final stages of reaffirming the 2009 vision and mission of the first Strategic Plan, and revising the core values and goals. These four elements serve as the foundation to the

development of the metrics with which the PSB will measure our growth toward the four goals. The School Committee is expected to be approving the Strategic Plan 2.0 in April 2014.

Parent Communication and Involvement

In its vision, the Public Schools of Brookline is dynamic, collaborative, equitable, engaged with the community, and contributing to the world. We are very deliberate in keeping parents informed and including them as critical stakeholders. Examples of this include, but not limited to:

- Publication of curriculum documents: website learning expectations for all K-8 subjects, BHS course syllabi available on the Aspen Parent Portal, and the course of studies on the BHS website.
- School Council membership and member training
- Program Review committees
- Superintendent Forums
- Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs)
- Title I Parent Forums
- School Committee meetings – Public Comment time

Program Review (Director – Amy Martin)

Each year, two or three programs or curriculum areas begin the process of Program Review. The goal of Program Review is to improve student achievement through a comprehensive and rigorous examination of our programs. The Program Review process makes use of established evaluation methods to determine strategies for continuous program improvement. The Program Review process in the Public Schools of Brookline involves four phases:

Phase I – STUDY Assess the current state of the program and create a vision for the future.

Phase II – PLAN Determine what is necessary for continuous improvement; define resources and determine available funding.

Phase III – IMPLEMENTATION Put the plan (strategies/actions for continuous improvement) into place with adequate resources and professional development.

Phase IV – REVIEW Check on the progress of the Action Plan; debrief the review process; collect data on indicators of success.

All curriculum-based subject areas have completed one cycle of Program Review, Phases I – IV. Numerous improvements have been accomplished or are underway as a result of Program Review, including, for example:

- Revised K – 8 Learning Expectations were approved by the Brookline School Committee in Math, Visual Arts, Performing Arts, Social Studies, one strand in Science (Nature of Science), Health and Wellness
- K – 8 Learning Expectations are expected to be approved within the next two years for English Language Arts and Literacy, and Math (aligned to the 2011 MA Curriculum Frameworks which reflect the Common Core State Standards), Science (content strands aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards), and Career and Vocational Technology Education (CVTE).

- First draft K – 12 Learning Expectations for the process skills of learning are being created
- Implementation of ThinkMath!, K – 5 is complete
- Implementation of Impact Math, 6, 7, and 8 is complete
- Implementation of Grade 7 Health is complete
- Initiation of math challenge option is in use (“circle, square, diamond” differentiation)
- Creation and implementation of Brookline Common Assessments (BCAs)

Assessments of Student Learning

In Brookline, our pK-8 Learning Expectations (LEs) and high school course syllabi describe what we want students to learn and assessments show evidence of what students have learned. The various assessments used in Brookline fall into three categories – teachers’ individual class assessments, MCAS (future PARCC anticipated), and Brookline’s common assessments. Each of these groups of assessments serve different purposes and take on different forms.

- State-mandated standardized tests provide the District with information on curriculum strengths and areas for attention, as well as information on students’ learning (e.g. MCAS).
- District grade level and common course assessments provide the District with information on how students perform relative to Brookline’s Learning Expectations and course syllabi (e.g. BHS common course final exams, grade 7 & 8 assessment of science inquiry skills).
- Classroom level assessments allow teachers to what students are learning during the unit or lesson and end of unit or lesson assessments to see what students have learned (e.g. informal question and answer, performances, quizzes, and tests).

Pieced together, these assessments create a truer and richer picture of student learning in Brookline. To continue further development of our assessment system, we will continue to:

- Expand the pilot common grade level assessments in Math, English, Social Studies, Science, and Elementary World Language.
- Continue the creation of common assessments (for the purpose of creating District Determined Measures and shared formative assessments).
- Collect data on BHS common course final exams.
- Share effective classroom level assessments that address the needs of diverse learners across the system.
- Advance the analyses of assessment data, including Brookline assessments and MCAS.
- Advance teachers’ and administrators’ collaborative review of data and creation of action plans.

Professional Development

Professional Development in the Public Schools of Brookline is defined as adult learning experiences that improve educators’ knowledge and skills, enabling them to work effectively with students to improve their achievement. The content of the professional learning that we offer and coordinate is informed by the system-wide goals and strategies as outlined in the Strategic Plan. The elements of our professional development include: a focus on student learning needs as informed by classroom, school and/or system data; improvement of educational practice through self-assessment and feedback on authentic educator and student work; collaborative relationships and processes that provide opportunities to engage in joint work and to tap the collective knowledge of the group; reflective dialogue that offers individuals a challenge to

their thinking as well as new perspectives on their practice and beliefs; and a commitment to implementing new learning.

In addition to content focused courses and institutes, some examples of our system-wide Professional Development opportunities include: state-mandated courses such as RETELL courses; courses to facilitate inclusion practices, such as *Schools Attuned*, *Differentiated Instruction*, *Responsive Classroom and Developmental Designs*; Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBP), all required annual trainings (e.g., bullying prevention); courses to foster collegial relationships among educators such as *Critical Friends Groups* and *Facilitative Leadership*; courses that further educational equity such as *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy*; and our first year mentoring program and *Mentor Seminars* for second and third year teachers to support them in a collegial and reflective format (described in detail below).

Mentoring and Induction Program (within Professional Development)

The mission of the mandatory district-wide Mentoring and Induction Program is to support beginning and new-to-district teachers during their first three years in the Public Schools of Brookline. The program matches an experienced educator (mentor) with an incoming teacher, and both the incoming teacher and the mentor engage in various forms of professional development that foster growth in their own practice and in the learning of their students. Their learning is supported by the building principal, grade level or department colleagues, and the K-8 Curriculum Coordinators, K-12 Curriculum Coordinators and 9-12 and Department Coordinators.

The Mentoring and Induction Program strives to create an environment where collegial, reflective practice is the norm, and where students, teachers and administrators build a community of reflective and self-directed learners. It is built on the premise that incoming teachers - as adults - know themselves as learners, have a natural, inherent potential to learn, and will be motivated to work collaboratively with their mentors to create the kinds of learning that will improve their practice and improve student learning. Thus, support is individualized, based on the needs of the incoming teachers and their students.

Goals

The Mentoring and Induction Program is specifically designed to support, assist and encourage beginning and new-to-district teachers to:

- ✓ Provide meaningful, engaging, quality education to their students
- ✓ Attend to the Public School of Brookline's Core Values of high academic achievement for all students, excellence in teaching, building and maintaining collaborative relationships, and sustaining respect for human differences
- ✓ Become reflective practitioners who monitor and adjust their practice to improve student learning
- ✓ Increase their professional expertise
- ✓ Establish collegial relationships that will last over time
- ✓ Remain in the teaching profession and continue the Public Schools of Brookline's tradition of excellence

For Incoming Educators

The Public Schools of Brookline's incoming teacher Mentoring and Induction program offers:

Orientation to the System's Value, Goals and Priorities

There is a mandatory, two-day orientation, with the following desired outcomes:

- Awareness of the Public Schools of Brookline's core values
- Awareness of the system-wide focus on Educational Equity
- Awareness of the people and resources available to incoming educators
- Understanding of the Public Schools of Brookline's Mentor Program
- Planning for the first few days of school, with an emphasis on classroom routines that establish high expectations for all learners

Mentor Facilitators work in pairs to facilitate these two days, along with veteran teachers and specialists. Special Educators meet with the system's special education administrators to be oriented to the special education program, processes, practices, and use of E-sped.

As part of these two days of orientation, all PreK-12 teachers also participate in a session titled: Equity, Race and Cultural Competence: A beginning conversation. During these four hours, teachers:

- Explore a continuum of cultural proficiency
- Listen to Brookline students as they talk about the development of racial identity, equity and achievement
- Consider a framework for culturally responsive pedagogy that engages all students at high levels of learning

Orientation to the School

Most teachers also spend one day prior to the opening of school in their buildings with the Mentor Facilitator, Principal, and other teachers new to the school, so they can be introduced to the school's culture, families, traditions and key people. New teachers are also welcome in their schools to set up their classrooms prior to the official first day back.

Why plan alone? Optional Orientation Days

Prior to Orientation, classroom teachers and special educators are invited to three days of optional professional development with Curriculum Coordinators and veteran classroom teachers, who introduce teachers and special educators to the Learning Expectations, program philosophies, specific units of study, and materials/resources for Math, ELA, Social Studies and Science.

During the School Year

Each new teacher is assigned a mentor. Teachers who have changed buildings and/or grade levels receive a mentor if requested by the principal, but are not obliged to attend orientation. Mentors and mentees meet regularly, and keep a record of their meetings (dates, content of conversations, etc.). Mentor Facilitators

work with their principals and the Director of Professional Development to match mentors with incoming teachers.

- New PreK-8 teachers receive a *Hands-on Handbook for Incoming Teachers*, designed to walk them through their first days of schools as well as each month of the school year. K-5 classroom teachers receive a copy of The First Six Weeks of School.
- The Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources meets with new teachers individually to discuss their progress on their licensure.
- Mentor facilitators meet monthly with new teachers in their buildings to discuss issues related to school culture, preparing for back to school night, setting professional goals, conducting parent conferences, communicating with families, reporting progress/grades, etc.
- New PreK-8 teachers have two observation days – one in November and one in March. They observe in their own schools and in other schools, and debrief their observations in their monthly new teacher meetings. High School teachers observe other teachers up to 16 times during the school year, and are observed by the mentor program coordinators at least twice.
- New K-8 classroom teachers meet every six-weeks for two hours after school with a math grade level facilitator to plan their upcoming units.
- There is one system wide two-hour session in February for PreK-8 teachers on effective assessment practices.

Mentor Facilitators:

- Are building-based - they lead the program in their school, and supervise the mentor/mentee relationships.
- Meet monthly with the Director of Professional Development to coordinate the program district-wide.
- Receive a base stipend plus an additional amount for each new teacher in the building.
- Receive 15 PDPs.
- High School Mentor Program Coordinators (one math teacher and one social studies teacher) have a reduced course load in order to do this work.

For Second and Third Year Teachers

K-12 teachers who are beginning their second and/or third year in Brookline as are invited to participate in this professional development initiative, **which fulfills the Massachusetts State Department of Education's requirement that teachers participate in fifty hours of mentored professional development after their Induction year.** Participants deepen their content knowledge, expand their pedagogical repertoire, strengthen their capacity to be reflective, and develop the skills and habits necessary to collaboratively examine their practice.

This mentoring and professional learning initiative matches an experienced educator with a small group (approximately 6-8) of second and third year teachers. The experienced educator acts as a mentor, advisor and coach whose primary responsibility is to help the group build a community of reflective, self-directed learners where collegial, reflective practice is the norm. The initiative is built on the premise that beginning teachers - as adults - know themselves as learners, have a natural, inherent potential to learn, and are motivated to engage in learning that improves their practice and student learning.

The experience begins with a three-day August seminar for second year teachers (the third day of the

seminar is optional for continuing third year teachers), followed by monthly two-hour Critical Friends Groups meetings, and a three-hour portfolio session in June, during which teachers document, reflect on, and reframe their teaching practice. Three-graduate credits from Salem State College are available for teachers who complete 35 hours in one year.

Programs and Practices

Multiple programs and practices are impacting student achievement throughout our schools, including, for example:

- Continued support of the K-8 Literacy Initiative and participation in the Literacy Collaborative
- Continued support of the BHS literacy initiative – Content Reading Initiative (CRI)
- Development of a data warehouse to advance our use of data for decision making at the classroom level and system level
- Continued attention and resources for *Steps to Success* to support of our low-income students in public housing
- Continued support of the Calculus Project whose goal is to improve the number of students of color in advanced math classes
- Continued support of POWER Literacy Project whose goal is to improve literacy skills for incoming freshman at BHS
- Wheelock Kindergarten and First Grade Intern program that places an intern seeking dual-certification in elementary and special education in first grade classrooms
- Continuation of a new Special Education organization model that supports one Educational Team Facilitator (ETF) in every school
- Continued development of Child Study Teams
- Steps to Success (described below)

***Steps to Success* (Coordinator – Nadia Chamblin-Foster)**

Steps to Success (STS) is a comprehensive educational achievement program providing academic, social development and family support for low-income students and their families. Working with young people in Grades 4 to 12, the program seeks to break through the attitudes and substantive barriers - both personal and institutional - that can make it difficult for these students to succeed in school and pursue higher education. With both school- and community-based programs, STS currently engages approximately 300 students and their families, most living in Brookline public housing, in programs designed to ensure that school success and post-secondary education become absolute goals and achievable realities for our students.

The core of STS is its long-term relationship-based mentoring model. STS staff Advisors work with students and their families throughout their school career. Advisors track student progress through a system of competency-based skill development, get to know families in their home and link them more closely with school teachers, administrators and other staff members. In 2010, STS has launched a “College Success Initiative,” providing STS alumni with a college Advisor through their first two years of college or other post-secondary program as well.

STS operates in four programmatic areas -

- Academic enrichment and mentoring: After school programs, summer learning activities and excursions, homework centers, tutoring;

- Work connections for youth: Job placements for over 80 paid summer interns, grades 8-12, in both public and private sector employment, coupled with afternoon seminars on financial literacy, career exploration and college preparation;
- Early college awareness and readiness: Campus visits and programs with our college partners, SAT prep and detailed work on the college application and financial aid process; and
- Family support services: Free English language classes, resource and referral services for low-income adults wishing to reconnect with education, job readiness and training, work opportunities, and college investment workshops for parents.

BUILDING CURRICULUM ACCOMMODATIONS PLANS (BCAPs)

Using the DCAP, every principal creates their own Building Accommodation Plan (BCAP) for their school. The BCAP demonstrates that the principal, staff, and the School Council are committed to meeting the needs of students with diverse needs in the regular education classroom. The plan outlines the services and accommodations available to teachers as they support a struggling student. These supports include, but are not limited to, direct and systematic instruction in reading and the provision of services to address the needs of children whose behavior may interfere with learning. The BCAP also includes provisions for teacher mentoring, collaboration and parental involvement.